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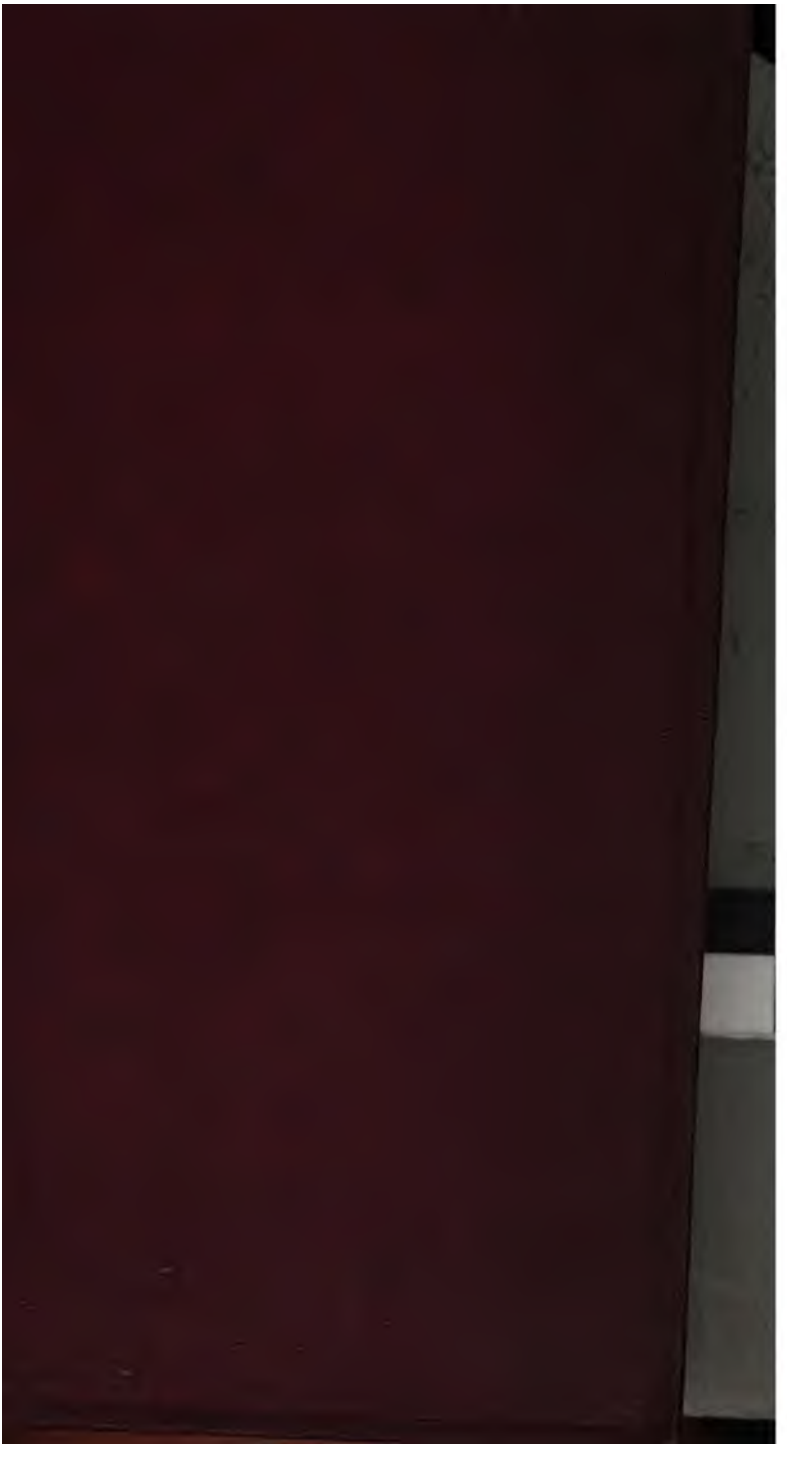

THE MORNING LAND.

THE MORNING LAND.

BY

EDWARD DICEY,

LATE SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OF THE "DAILY TELEGRAPH" IN THE EAST

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THE MORNING LAND.

THE PORT OF EGYPT.

ALEXANDRIA, *October* 25.

COMING to Alexandria fresh from Turkish territory, I seem to have passed from stagnation and decay to active life and progress. In estimating the worth of this impression, I must fairly make allowance for the condition of mind and body in which I landed at Alexandria. Almost any place in the world—say Hull itself—would have looked bright and cheerful after you had been confined for days in a sort of floating Black Hole of Calcutta. In the second place, I must fairly own that the Alexandria I have seen as yet has not much more pretension to be called an Eastern city than Boulogne-sur-Mer has to be considered a French watering-place. The Alexandria of which I write is a thriving Franco-Italian town, planted as an exotic on the shores of Africa. Still, on the other hand, Pera was often pointed out to me as a proof of

Ottoman progress. Alexandria is surely as much an Egyptian as Pera is a Turkish city; and, after all, it is something to say for a country that foreign residents have succeeded in establishing comfortable quarters within it. If the "genius loci," which in the East I take to be the spirit of dirt and indolence, had been as powerful on the Nile as on the Bosphorus, Alexandria could never have been called into being.

Could the sandbanks which line the coast of Belgium be baked for a score of years under such a sun as the Flamands can but faintly conceive in the hottest of the dog days, the shore between Ostend and Blankenberghe would bear a close resemblance to that of Egypt as seen from the Mediterranean. Out at sea you behold the masts and pillars of Alexandria rising out of the water long before you recognise the low strip of sand on which the city stands. The port as we entered it was, perhaps, exceptionally crowded. The *Aigle* was lying there at anchor, with the Imperial standard flying at her stern—the Empress having made a very quick passage, and reached Alexandria on Friday morning. There were the Italian ironclads, which have come here as an escort for Prince Amadeus. An English man-of-war is also stationed here; and the Egyptian ironclads, which

the Sultan grudges so sorely, are moored for the present under the shelter of the Alexandrian forts. Still, if all the frigates, ironclads, and gunboats had been removed, the Port of Egypt would have been crowded with vessels. There was nothing like the variety and picturesqueness of shipping to be seen in the Bosphorus; but even an inexperienced eye could see that the average burden and tonnage of the ships were of far greater amount. About the European quarter there is little that need be said, except that it is prosperous and handsome, and comparatively clean. The houses are built of stone or brick, instead of wood; the streets are broad and fairly well paved; the lamps are lit with gas; the shop windows are decked out with European goods arrayed after the Western fashion. Excellent open carriages ply at every corner for hire; and the donkeys of which old books of Eastern travel have told us so much are no longer the fashionable means of locomotion in Alexandria. The very nomenclature of the streets is cosmopolitan. I noticed close together, in one quarter, the Rue Bonaparte, Rue Bismarck, and Rue Napier. Napoleons and rupees are respectively the staples of the gold and silver currency. There are English hotels, French *cafés*, German beerhouses, and Italian *ristoratores;*

and, as usual in towns of this sort, the only people who seem not to be at home are the natives.

Between the city and the suburb of Rammle, which bears about the same relation to Alexandria as New Brighton does to Liverpool, there runs the most non-descript line of railroad it has ever been my fate to traverse. Some of its trains are worked by steam-power, others by horse-power; and the trains in which you are dragged by horses cost double the price of the others. The porters and ticket takers are all Italian; the inscriptions over the offices and waiting-rooms, the directions to travellers, the bye-laws of the Rammle Railway Company, are all written in Italian: but the rolling stock is English; the carriages are of genuine British make, with "first class" and "second class" painted on their doors, and belonged once, as you may see by looking at the iron plates between the buffers, to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railroad. After true English fashion, carriages constructed for the chill, bleak moorland of England are selected for this hot, clear climate, where air and space are the two things most desirable. But the force of circumstances has compelled the management to submit so far to the exigencies of the case, as to add to their good old-fashioned, close,

stuffy carriages, a number of long, windowless, American cars in which you can breathe at any rate. Surely no line, not even in the United States, ever had an odder collection of names for its roadside stations: Rammle is genuine Egyptian, Bulkley is as unequivocally British, Schegger is emphatically Teutonic, Bella Vista is Italian; but to what nation in the world can you ascribe the name "Sidney o Schurtz," which belongs to the eastern terminus of the line in question? All along the line, the strip of land between it and the seashore is covered with villas, over which wave the national flags of the owners, the Union Jack being perhaps the most frequently seen. Within the memory of young men in Alexandria, this Rammle was a portion of the desert; but the ground has been reclaimed, and is now converted into a site for the summer residences of the Scanderene merchants.

Yet even on this most un-Oriental of lines you have the East always present to you. It is so with everything at Alexandria. I am not speaking alone of the glaring sunlight, of the cloudless, dazzling sky, of the rich sunburnt hue and colour. But everywhere in the midst of this European civilization you come upon the footsteps of the East. Amidst the gaily-dressed French and Italian ladies, with whom the train is crowded, you

meet here and there native Egyptian women, with their faces shrouded from view in a manner you scarcely ever see in Constantinople: the lower half of the veil, from the eyes downward, is black; across the forehead, from the bridge of the nose to the parting of the hair, they have fastened, in some way or other, a small gilt tube, to which the upper portion of the veil is fastened by strings. All along the roads are groves of palm-trees and patches of desert, on which the tents of the Bedouins are pitched; at the crossways there are strings of camels waiting for the train to pass; the roofs of every dwelling, European or Egyptian, are flat and chimneyless; and there, in a stonemason's yard hard by the station, stands a squat, short obelisk, which, you are told, is Cleopatra's Needle.

So you are kept in a perpetual state of mental worry as to whether you are in Europe or in Africa. There, at the corner of Lombard Street (*sic*), is the British Post-office, and on the steps is a negro from the Soudan, black as coal, basking in the sunshine in a white shirt barely reaching to his knees. There is an English bookseller's, where copies of London penny newspapers, of a fortnight old, are offered for sale at fivepence each; and the entrance is blocked by the fruit-stall of a vendor

of dates, melons, and yams. There is a French *café*, with a "dame de comptoir" in rich array, and waiters with white ties, and crowds of Frenchmen drinking "demi-tasses" and "petits verres;" and as you look you are hustled out of the road by a string of camels striding slowly along beneath their heavy weights. The donkeys stand wherever there is a patch of shade, and, bestrid by Englishmen of unmistakeable cut and build, are driven by Arab boys running behind and shouting the oddest jargon of expletives of all lands that ever issued from Christian—or un-Christian—mouth. There are rows of book-stalls which would look at home on the Quai Voltaire at Paris; cigar-shops, with portraits of Mazzini and Garibaldi, which ought rightly to be situated in the Via di Toledo at Naples, or the Corso at Milan. Hard by is an old-fashioned British tavern, where, as you are informed by a fly-blown bill in the window, chops and steaks may be had on the shortest notice; and the only difference from home which you perceive as you enter the sanded bar-parlour is, that the buzzing sound with which the room is filled arises not from flies, but from mosquitoes. So the East and the West are shaken up together in a strange *olla podrida;* and the result is the Port of Egypt.

THE DELTA OF THE NILE.

CAIRO, *October* 26.

How it came to pass that the ancient Romans, even in the Augustan age, should have remained so blind to the beauties of mountain scenery, over which our young ladies and poets go into raptures, is a problem which has puzzled many renowned classical students. I have no light to throw upon the issue, and nothing can be further from my purpose than any approach to the question whether there is any such thing as an abstract standard of natural beauty. All I wish to remark is, that just as we wonder at the lack of taste of the ancients, who deemed mountains a defect, glaciers an eyesore, and eternal snow a monstrosity of nature, so it may come to pass that succeeding generations may marvel at our obtuseness in not appreciating the exquisite charm of low-level lands. A day may come when the exploits of the Alpine Club may be deemed merely silly, and then our descendants will moralize over the inconceivable stupidity of men who

actually ascended nearly inaccessible peaks, that they might lose sight of all the fulness and glory lying in the lowlands of this fair world of ours. Whenever the mountain mania shall pass out of fashion, people will be astonished at the indifference with which we of the nineteenth century ignored the beauties which lay close at our feet. In a book of travels in Egypt, composed with more than average intelligence, I find the Alexandria and Cairo Railroad commended, because it conveys you so rapidly over an utterly monotonous and uninteresting country. Nor do I imagine that the enunciator of this statement is by any means singular in his views. Of all the hundreds of tourists I have conversed with concerning the Overland Route, no one ever alluded to the journey across the Nile Delta except as a tedious day's labour, to be slept through if possible. Yet to me, apart from all the associations with which the scene is rife, there is a beauty about this crossing of the Delta, seldom surpassed among all the landscapes of many lands upon which it has been my lot to gaze. There is no accounting for tastes. Had I lived in the days of the Perizzittes and the Jebusites, I should have belonged to that tribe of idolaters—I forget their name—who built their temples upon the plains, not upon high places. So you must bear with me if I dwell some-

what on the beauties of this dull, dead, flat Delta district.

The day is at its hottest as I drive along the dusty straggling street which leads from Alexandria to the Cairo station. The shops are shut, the very beggars are asleep at their roadside corners. The long shed which serves for a terminus seems to be filled with heated air, and till the train has moved slowly out of the suburbs, and we catch the faint sea-breeze as we crawl onwards, it is difficult to think of anything except how to exclude the sunlight, which, with a strange and perverse ingenuity, keeps glaring in alternately at every window-pane. But we are soon under way; we have lost the last glimpse of the Mediterranean, and we are in the midst of the boundless plain we have to traverse. We are skirting the Mahmoudieh Canal. The high dykes between which it runs, conceal it for the most part from our view; but above the banks we see multitudes of white leg-of-mutton-shaped sails, bulging out with the breeze, and flitting over the surface of the plain. For a time the marsh land, dank with reeds and pools of water, and ponds of sedge, stretches around us. There is not much sign of culture or tillage anywhere. Every now and then we see the black beams of the Eastern wells looming against the sky. Of all the devices by which

water is raised from the earth, that of the beam and stone is the commonest and simplest. A pole is stuck upright hard by the well; on the top there swings a long cross-beam, weighted with a stone at one end, and with a rope and pail dangling from the other. When you want to draw water, you pull down the rope till the pail is sunk beneath the surface, and then the weight of the loaded end raises the full pail to the mouth of the well. In Russia, in Italy, in Hungary, and in the extreme west of America —in all countries, in fact, wherein machinery is little used —you see wells built after this fashion, and it was doubtless by some contrivance of this kind that Abraham watered his flocks in the old Bible days.

Among the marshes you come from time to time on patches of green wheat, well-nigh ripe for the harvest—the fourth and last harvest of the year; you pass rows of cotton plants, standing stalk deep in the stagnant water; you see small islets of rich green sward, on which herds of black shaggy buffaloes browse at leisure. But the water predominates over the land. Not so very long ago this marsh was cultivated ground; but in our great war with France we broke the dykes of the canal, and flooded the plain with salt sea-water, and the desolation wrought then has never yet been made good again: so the wild fowl and

moor-hen have got a home where once there were fields and villages, and what the country has lost in wealth it has gained in a beauty of its own. Round the outskirts of the marsh there runs a fringe of palm-trees, and their tall pope's-head-brush shaped heads grow distinct and clear as we pass on to the Delta country.

There is a look of Holland, doubtless, in the dykes, in the windmills, in every knoll and bank, in the vessels whose hulls are hidden from view, and whose masts seem to be sailing on dry land; but there is nothing Dutch about the infinite richness and variety of growth. The face of the country reminds you somehow of an immense gridiron, the bars being formed of ridges and ditches. Cotton plantations, speckled with their bright whity-pink flowers; golden wheat crops, ripe for the sickle; Indian corn, with its horny comb of yellow grain; sugar-canes, bending beneath their burden of leaves; palm-groves, with the red bunches of dates tied fillet fashion to the cone-shaped bark—fill up in turn the plots and spaces between the rills of water. To this Nile culture there is an inferior as well as a superior limit. If the swell of the ground rises above water-mark, the land is a desert; if the roll of the plain sweeps much below the mark, the land becomes a swamp; and so, here and there, in the very midst of the most

fertile districts, you will come upon a patch of bare desert sand, whereon nothing grows, or upon a mere sedgy marsh, whereon weeds alone find sustenance. But happily the ups and downs of that watered plain are so few in number, so slight in dimensions, that the water reaches well-nigh everywhere, fertilizing everything. There is scarce a break or gap in that long series of fields, unenclosed save by silver threads of water sparkling in the sun, alongside of which the train carries us all too swiftly. The fellahs have not yet left their work, but are still toiling amid the crops. For the most part they are working at the trenches, or else preparing the lands from which the crops have just been cut, for another sowing. In the same field you will see buffaloes, oxen, donkeys, mules, camels—all employed in dragging loads or carrying burdens. There are women hoeing the rice; children bearing baskets upon their heads; and men, women, children—half-naked often, barefoot always—have all got rich colours in their ragged attire, glaring, not inharmoniously, against their dusty skins. There is not a cloud in the sky, not a ripple on the water, not a breath of air across the flat level, and it is only by the lengthening of the shadows we know that evening is stealing on.

Ever and anon the railroad carries us close to a fellah

village. Mud camps are the thought they first suggest to you. Round about them there runs a low wall of baked earth, and within this enclosure are crowded as many mud huts as can be squeezed together. From the carriage window I could only note that they were, for the most part, shaped like Melton pork pies, with a slit in the side, which served for door and window alike, and a hole in the roof for the smoke to escape. Dungheaps were piled in the narrow spaces between the huts; cakes of dried camel dung, used for fuel, were stacked upon the roofs; dogs, fowls, and children lay, perched or squatted upon the piles of fuel. Wretched and filthy these earth-dwellings must be, but under a sun which bakes and broils all day long, dirt and filth are toned down to a dry dust colour, which takes away much of the look of misery and squalor I have seen in Irish cabins and the dwellings of Russian moujiks. Such as they are, there is no lack of these mud villages. The whole face of the country teems, not only with vegetation but with life. Far and near you can see the fellah hovels, and at the roadside stations there are towns with stone houses and handsome buildings, and a look of growth and well-doing. Progress is relative, and I can well understand that most travellers coming to Egypt from England or France, or even Italy, are struck with the

backwardness and destitution of the country; but if you come here, as I have done, from Turkey, you are astonished at the movement, activity, and life you see around you. Immense trains full of cotton bales were standing at the stations waiting to be forwarded. At intervals, along the track, you saw factory chimneys rising from the level. Portable engines were to be seen constantly at work in the fields. Canals, locks, bridges, dykes, and field-roads were visible at every turn. There was traffic at the stations; people got in and out, and horses and donkeys were in waiting to carry passengers to their homes. It may be, as I am told, that the Viceroy alone benefits from the prosperity of Egypt. I confess I have not yet heard any satisfactory explanation how this can be. For the present I only note the fact that the prosperity exists.

But I am wandering from the subject of that journey through the Delta land, something of whose rich and rare beauty I would gladly record in such manner as words can do. Who was it that inveighed against the hideousness of railway stations, and their destruction of the picturesque in travel? Let him halt at the station of Teh El Barood and recant his errors. Over the flat roof of the shed there rise the sepia-coloured walls of the town lined with latticed houses, and above these tower the minarets, on whose

round sugar-loaf summits the pigeons perch fearlessly, safe guarded by their sacred character. On the bare whitewashed walls of the station, the shadows of every object on the line are thrown with a vivid distinctness as though they were stamped and scorched. Talk of shadows —why, our English shadows are the mere shades of shadow —the feeble photographs of a proof engraving! On the platform grew the pepper-tree, with its airy foliage; the prickly pear, with its great green slabs of leaves; the palm tree, with its branches sloping outwards, like an umbrella turned inside out; the acacias, with their massive bushes of green. Bare-legged boys, with no covering save a close cotton pinafore, scarcely reaching to the knees and hanging down beneath the waist, sell water from earthen pitchers; and girls dressed in tatters, but with silver bangles fastened round their wrists, offer you pomegranates, red and rich and luscious.

Was it at Teh El Barood there were the pomegranates and the pepper-trees? I am not sure, after all. It may have been at Abou-Hummus, or Birket-es-Sab, or any of the strange-named stopping-places at which our train made halt. At one and all there was the same background to the scene, with more or less of the same decorations. We had stayed for some little time, I know, at one, and as we

moved forth again into the open, the hour for striking off work had come, and the fellahs were trooping home along the towing-path of the canal, by whose side our line ran for a time. Hundreds of little donkeys, with panniers full of garden stuff, trotted along one after the other; whenever the burden was not too great, the driver sat between the panniers, with his bare legs dangling in front over the ass's shoulders. Camels stalked past, led by ropes; yokes of oxen jogged homewards, with the huge wooden collars around their necks, and the pole dragging in the dust between them. Women with baskets on their heads and children in their arms, picked their way amidst the mules and donkeys. There were buffaloes drinking at the water's edge. In little pools, off the main stream of the canal, men were washing their feet and faces in preparation for the evening prayer; over the fields there flew flocks of white pigeons returning to their roosts ; in the distance were flights of swallows, coming southward for their winter home; in mid-air, great herons floated with their wings poised, ready to welcome the returning stranger; and upon the great expanse, on the mud villages, on the mosques with their groves of palms, on the sails of the boats, on the rice swamps and the wheat fields, on the long river-side processions of labourers trudging to their homes, on the

rills and pools and tanks, there was spread the glory of the setting sun.

We are drawing near the Nile. The water has risen higher than usual this summer, and the thirst-parched country is drinking its fill. At short intervals along the banks of the river, and its main arteries, are pits sunk in the ground, to which a wheel is placed. The wheel is turned by steam-power in the more important sluice holes, but more commonly by horses or oxen, and by it the water is poured into all the rills which intersect the fields. Night and day the pumps are kept working at this season of the year, and as the evening closes in, the plain begins to twinkle with the countless lamps which light up these water-wheels. The time for the evening prayer has come: on the roadside you see groups of men kneeling, and bowing their heads to the ground; even amid the rattle of the trains you can catch the sing-song sound of their droning chant, and louder than the chant—louder even than the rattle of the train—booms the croaking of whole choruses of frogs, which, with sunset, have come out to take the air, and are chattering after the heat of the day has ended.

It was dark as we crossed the Rosetta and Damietta branches of the Nile, and we could see little but vast

sheets of water stretching far away into the dim distance, spotted and streaked with dark blotches, which in the gloaming you could hardly tell to be the hulls of vessels.

Night comes on rapidly in the East; the moon rises late now, and I peered in vain through the darkness to catch a glimpse of the Pyramids, which rise into view as you draw near Cairo. So we pass on through the night till the gaslights flash into our window, and we are entering the great hall of the Cairo station.

THE CAPITAL OF EGYPT.

CAIRO, *October* 27.

GIVEN a mature age, a height close upon six feet, a weight over eleven stone without your boots, a certain impression that a merciful man is merciful to his beast, and a still keener sense of the ludicrous, and you feel considerable hesitation at mounting on a jackass so small that your feet almost touch the ground, and promenading in this fashion through the crowded streets of a foreign capital. But if you are at Cairo, you must do as the Cairenes do. After all, the donkeys are sleek, well-fed, and strong; and if you don't ride them, somebody else, very likely heavier than you, will. As for the look of the thing, well, if anybody should jeer at you, you will not be a bit the wiser; and moreover, odd as it may seem to you, the notion of your looking—shall I say, like a guy?—does not apparently suggest itself even to the Cairo street urchins. About all southern nations I have always noticed a strange kind of unconsciousness. "To live and let live" is the motto on

which men act in the East; and if the fancy took you to walk about the streets of Cairo upon your arms and without your trousers, I doubt whether you could collect a crowd to stare at you. Moreover, short of going on donkey-back, you will find it hard to get about at all. It is too hot to walk, and the handsome open carriages which ply about for hire in front of the hotels can hardly take you through the narrow streets of the old city. In a short time one particular donkey-boy marks you for his own, and you become the rider of an individual donkey. My jackass's name is Blair Athol, his driver is called Osman, and for a good steady trot I would back the pair against any London cab. The fact that my moke, if I may be pardoned the phrase, is called after a Derby winner, is nowise remarkable. From the English tourists the boys pick up any names they hear mentioned frequently, and amongst the donkey tribe—of Cairo—I have found a Lord Ranelagh and a Mrs. Borrodaile.

Seated on the high saddle, with the red leather pommel in front, and your feet dangling loosely in the long stirrups, you can see Cairo as well as you could see London from the knifeboard of an omnibus; and even if the mode of locomotion were less easy than it is,

you must be singularly wanting in the talent of contemplative enjoyment if you can think much about your personal aspect as seen from the fellah point of view. What difference, after all, can one more strange figure make in a scene where everything is strange? The camels alone seem to transplant you at once into an unknown world. We have all laughed about the Teutonic Herr Professor, who evolved a camel out of his own consciousness; and most journalists are indebted to him for many an illustration in time of need. But since I have become familiar with the camel in daily life, I have learned to doubt whether the German scholar was quite such a fool as we have supposed. A camel is just the sort of animal you may picture to yourself from hearsay description. The camels I meet at every corner are the exact reproductions in flesh and blood of the wooden prototype which, in the recesses of a child's Noah's Ark, first made me acquainted with the shape of the animal. How every man knows his own camel is to me a mystery—each is the counterpart of every other. I admit that my archetypal camel used to lift his head straight up in the air in a way I do not note to be the fashion now. Possibly, however, the artificer sacrificed the interests of abstract truth to the consideration, that

an outstretched neck would be broken in the ark before the toy could be disposed of. Anyhow, these Egyptian camels stalk along with their necks craning forward well-nigh as far as they can reach. Their great splay feet swell out like sponges when pressed upon the ground with each successive tread. Where, as usually happens, there are four or five together in a file, the foremost one carries a bell round his head, the others follow behind, turning neither to the right nor the left, except at the signal of their leader. In the broad open spaces, in the narrow crowded streets, they tramp on with the same long, slow step; and the weight of the burdens they bear upon their backs seems to make no difference in their pace. I have seen camels with immense bales of cotton, with slabs of granite, with bundles of wooden poles strung across their shoulders, which yet moved along with no outward sign of distress or fatigue. They need no whip; their only harness is the halter, which fastens them one to the other; and their mouths are free, except in the case of a few, who, as my guide told me, were "very bad robbers," with no respect for the sacred rights of property, and were therefore punished for their disregard of the laws of "Meum et Tuum," by having iron muzzles fastened round their jaws. In the

city the camel-drivers frequently mount upon the animals, and from the top of the pack-loaded hump, on which they squat cross-legged, they must catch, I fancy, a good many glimpses through the wooden screen-work blinds, which with outstretched arms they could touch on either side of the narrow streets. But to ride upon a camel's back as men ride here is not given to the Frank, and therefore the secrets of the Harem run no risk of being disclosed to the eyes of adventurous tourists. I have seen a camel with two immense panniers swung across its back, a woman sitting on the top of each pannier, a negro and two little children perched between the women on the ridge of the back, and huge bundles of household goods piled up around the hump. The owner stalked in front, smoking as he walked; and after this fashion the family would travel for days through the desert.

"Wa, ah! Wa, ah, Rejol! Wa, ah! Wa'ah, Bint!" Very few hours can be passed in the streets of Cairo before you grow familiar with the sounds of which these words are the nearest approximation I can discover. "Take care, man; take care, girl"—this is the cry which you hear at every moment and upon every side. The Arabic "Wa, ah!" serves here the purpose which the cry of "Guarda" does in Stamboul; and here the demand for such a cry

is even more urgent than in the Turkish capital. If you except the streets of the new fashionable quarter of the Esbekieh, where the hotels are situated, there is not a street in all Cairo wider than Walbrook or Laurence Pountney Lane. Wych Street, where it debouches into the Strand, is spacious compared with most of the alleys you have to traverse. And through these thoroughfares there presses and squeezes all day a crowd well-nigh as dense as that which passes over London Bridge between nine and ten on a week-day morning. It is true there are no vans, drays, or omnibuses in the Cairo streets; but then there are knots of people gathered from daybreak to sunset in front of every shop: there are beggars, fruit-vendors, loafers, squatting upon every patch of shadow; and the idea that a thoroughfare ought not to be obstructed is as incomprehensible to the Oriental mind as to the gas and water companies of London. The streets are strewed with sand and tan, so that you can hardly hear a footstep fall upon the ground; and yet the camels stride, the donkeys canter, and the carriages gallop amidst the crowd, with no other precaution than the shouts of "Wa, ah! Wa, ah!" In front of every carriage there runs a Syce, with bare feet and legs, a white tunic

bound round his waist by a leather belt, a red fez upon his head, and a long stick brandishing in his hand. On he jostles, shoves, and elbows, twirling his stick as a drum-major does his bâton, and shouting, as he pants along, "Wa, ah! Wa, ah!" These running footmen are all boys, and, like many other people in the world, they have suffered cruelly from the progress of civilization. In the old streets they are an absolute necessity, and being compelled by the throng to halt every other minute, they can catch their breath from time to time; but, in the new broad thoroughfares which the Viceroy has laid down, the carriages can and do drive at full gallop. No Cairene who respects himself would be seen driving anywhere without a Syce in front; and the result is that these unlucky lads are obliged to run for miles in the hot glaring sun, shouting as they run and swinging their sticks meanwhile. Very few constitutions can stand the strain, and the trade of an *avant-coureur* is a short-lived and a hard one at the best.

Happily for the foot folk of Cairo, as well as for the running footmen, it is only the Pachas and the foreigners who drive about in carriages. Donkeys are to Cairo pretty much what cabs are to London and gondolas to Venice. With the exception of a few eccentric English-

men and the poorest of the fellahs, nobody ever walks anywhere; the people go about their business or their pleasure, to the bazaars, the baths, the mosques, upon donkey-back; and you must be of very small account indeed if, when you ride upon a donkey, you pilot him yourself. I doubt whether any ordinary Cairo donkey would run at all if he were guided solely by his rider. It is the switch, and even more than the switch, the voice of the lad at his tail, which directs his steps and pace. Mounted upon your ass, you have about as much to do with making him go as you have with driving the cab-horse when you are inside a Hansom. You may interfere by pulling the reins when you seem to be within an inch of riding down women and children; but you will soon find it is safer for the crowd as well as for yourself to trust entirely to the donkey-boy: and as to crying "Wa, ah, Bint!" and "Wa, ah, Rejol!" why, in the first place, the street folk will probably not understand your pronunciation; and, in the second, what is the good of keeping a dog and barking yourself? Moreover, great as my faith is in the boys, my faith in the donkeys is even greater; there is something marvellous in the care with which they will trip aside and pick their way, and step gingerly, so as to

avoid hurting any one by whom they brush. And what makes their skill more wonderful is that nothing delights the donkey-lads so much as making their beasts gallop whenever the crowd is densest. Considering that the drivers have to run themselves, and that the heat is overpowering all through the day, it is odd that they should prefer running to walking; but they take a pride in the speed of their animals, and, however much you wish it, you find it hard to persuade them to take things leisurely.

But, indeed, about the whole of those classes of the community with whom a mere traveller comes into contact, there is visible here an energy and activity of which you see no trace in European Turkey. Hot as the climate is, there is far less of the idling and loitering and dawdling in the streets of which you see so much in Istamboul. It is full noon while I write, and the glare of the sun is so powerful, even through the thick curtains, that the manual act of writing is a fatigue: and yet the Arab workmen are working in the full glare of the sun at a house which is building opposite to my windows. The loose, baggy trousers, fastened together a little way above the heels, which are so universal in Constantinople, are unknown here. Whatever other

complaint you may make against the ordinary dress of the Egyptians, you cannot say it interferes with the free exercise of the limbs. A coarse blouse of blue cotton, reaching down to the knees, and fastened by a sash about the waist, and a white muslin turban bound in folds round the head, constitute the whole of the normal dress of the fellah. His feet and legs are bare, his breast is bare, and when the wind blows his blouse about, or he lifts up the tail to wipe the sweat from his face, you learn—whether you wish for the knowledge or not—that underclothing of any kind is not deemed a requisite of Arabian costume.

The more well-to-do of the community wear linen shirts under the tunic; but the well-to-do are in a decided minority; and, in consequence of this universality of the cotton blouse, there is little to be seen in the streets of Cairo of the infinite variety and gorgeousness of apparel to be witnessed all over Istamboul and Pera, and notably at the bridge of the Sultana Valideh. The female element, which is so striking a feature in Constantinople, is almost wanting in the Cairo streets. Not only is the number of women you meet much smaller, but they are lacking in diversity of costume. Of the common fellah women a great many have their faces entirely uncovered, except

that the shawl droops somewhat over their forehead, after the fashion of Spence's statue of "Highland Mary." The white muslin yasmaks are not to be met in the open highways. When the women are veiled—and I take it that all above the labouring class are veiled—they are veiled with a vengeance. The blue cotton robe thrown over the head, and hanging down to the heels, is almost as much *de rigueur* as the silk ferighee of Stamboul. Under its folds you will every now and then catch a glimpse of a bright blue or yellow silk dress; but of the face you can get no notion. From the little brass or gilt tube, of which I have already spoken as dividing the forehead into two halves, and ending at the bridge of the nose, a black serge veil just the width of the face hangs in front of the dress right down to the feet. In children's fairy-books there used to be a picture of the old woman to whose nose the black pudding stuck by her husband's desire, in the story of the Three Wishes. If you have been familiar at any time with this picture, it is recalled to you by the aspect of these Cairo ladies.

But, instead of the blue cotton capes, you will see every now and then rich silk coverings, and the brass tube across the forehead will be replaced by a white tape, connecting

a white veil with the head-dress; and ladies, enveloped in such puffed-out folds of silk that they look like balloons half-filled with gas, will ride past on donkeys, sitting across the saddle man-fashion, with their yellow slippers stuck in the stirrups. There are women all dressed in white, women in red, and women in black; but of their faces—no matter what the richness or colour of their robes—you can see nothing. In this matter of veiling, as in most other things, there is an absence of pretence which you can hardly fail to notice. Here in Cairo, both for good and bad, you have the real East, not a nondescript medley of East and West. At Constantinople I was always haunted by an impression that the whole scene on which I gazed was a gorgeous masquerade got up regardless of expense, like an Oriental spectacle for an operatic ballet. But in Cairo the thing is real—the life around you is of the East, Eastern. So, also, there is little here of the startling contrast between the magnificence of the wealthy dwellings and the squalor of the hovels which struck me so much in Stamboul.

Had I been the Viceroy of Egypt, I would have so contrived it that the Empress's first view of Cairo should have been taken from the Citadel. A great city ought, according to my views, to be built by a river side, upon the

edge of a great plain, with heights rising close behind it, from which you can gaze upon it near enough to realize its grandeur, and yet far enough off to take in the whole panorama of the town. Very few capitals that I have ever seen fulfil these conditions. Paris, as seen from Montmartre, comes very near to my ideal. The view of London from Hampstead Heath would not be far from it, if that view could ever be visible through the smoke and fog. The spectacle of Moscow from the Kremlin, as I saw it in the pale sunset of a Russian winter day, has hitherto been the closest realization of my fancy I have ever looked upon. But the view of Cairo from the slopes of Mokattam, whereon stands the the Citadel of El-Kalah, surpasses them all in splendour. At your feet, as you pass from out the courtyard of the Mosque of Mohammed Ali, with its cloisters of alabaster pillars, lies the long broad line of Cairo. Over the vast expanse of flat stone roofs there towers a very forest of domes and minarets; beyond the city stretches a belt of palms and acacia-trees; beyond the trees the wide Nile stream, with its lagoons of flooded plains, shines brightly in the sunlight; and further on again, far as the eye can reach, there extend the desert sands, broken only by the masses of the Pyramids.

Hard by is the enclosure where the Mamelukes were massacred, and they show you still the crag from which the one survivor of the massacre leaped his horse down into the valley. Close at hand is the gorgeous Mosque which Mohammed Ali raised upon the spot where he carried out his dread purpose; and within a stone's-throw is the well in which Joseph was left to die by his brethren, when they brought home to Jacob the coat of many colours. There are sceptics who dispute the story. Some men won't believe anything; but really, in these days of spiritualism, when so many demands are made upon your faith, I am quite prepared to accept the statement that this is the very original well in which Joseph was left for dead. There is, too, this merit about the view of Cairo from the Citadel, that on leaving it you come down at once into the true city. It is the stock remark about Constantinople that, if you wish to retain your impression of its magnificence, you should never see it except from a distance. A similar remark could not be applied to Cairo. The city may be dark and dirty within, but the darkness and dirtiness of its streets harmonize with the idea you form of it when you gaze upon it from without. You pass on and on through winding streets so tall, and withal so narrow,

that you can scarcely see the sky between the high stone-built houses, covered as their fronts are with any number of latticed wooden balconies, jutting out to meet each other. And overhead, wherever the street widens out at all, so as to let in the light, they have hung awnings of carpet stuff, or placed rough structures of planks across the street to shut out the sun; and the cold gloom of the streets conceals much, doubtless, of their shabbiness and squalor. On you pass, turning constantly from right to left, and so confused by the crowd of carriages, camels, donkeys, foot-folk, in which you are jostled to and fro, that you notice little of the shops or their inmates till you come out upon the Esbekieh, and find yourself in a quarter of broad streets, open piazzas, theatres, opera-houses, and palaces, all interwoven with groves of palm-trees. Then you go further across the plain, pass a straggling suburb filled with factories, railroads, canals, and wharves, and you are upon the banks of the Nile; and, looking back, you see the bare, sharp-cut heights of Mokattam, standing out so bright and clear against the sky that they seem, though a mile or more away, to be within a stone's throw.

This, as I have said, is the route by which I would have my guests enter Cairo if I were manager in chief

of the Viceregal receptions. As it is, they quit the train in the heart of the manufacturing quarter; and it is only after they have wandered about for some time hither and thither that the beauty of Cairo is made manifest to their eyes.

THE MOOLED EL NEBBEH.

CAIRO, *November* 1.

TO-DAY, according to the Moslem calendar, is the twelve hundred and ninety-eighth anniversary of the birth of Mahomet; and to-day, in consequence, the festival of the Mooled el Nebbeh—the birthday of the Prophet, to quote its popular name—was celebrated with such scant pomp and curtailed honour as is permitted in these degenerate times. I fancy somehow that, if the courteous purveyors who cater for the entertainment of the Viceroy's guests had had things quite their own way, the ceremony of the Doseh would not have been included in the list of spectacles to be witnessed by the invited. Young Egypt is not proud of the ancient customs of the country, and would hardly call the attention of its Frank visitors to the existence of religious rites as barbarous, if not as bloody, as those of Juggernaut. But, having heard that the ceremony would take place to-day as usual, and having requested permission to view it, I found my

request at once acceded to with the promptitude I have uniformly met with whenever I have had occasion here to ask for any assistance. Two khavasses, armed with swords, were detailed for the service of myself and a fellow-tourist, and we were recommended to the special protection of the chief of the police.

It was noon when we took up our station in a narrow street of the Arab quarter in which stands the Mosque of Abu Bekr, the first and foremost of the Prophet's followers. The thoroughfares throughout this district are at all times so thronged with a motley crowd that I think I might have driven through it without noticing that there was more than one of the wonted stoppages of traffic which are constantly occurring in this labyrinth of alleys. Opposite the end of the street stood a tall house, with rows of windows shaded by half-closed Venetian blinds; and when you looked up at the windows, or rather the blank openings—for windows here, as elsewhere in old Cairo, are things unknown—you saw that they were filled with groups of closely-veiled women. One side of the street, from the corner to the doorway of the mosque—a distance, perhaps, of fifty yards—was skirted by the outer wall of the mosque's courtyard; and through the large openings in the wall, covered in

with a framework of iron bars, you could see a crowd, chiefly composed of women and children, peeping and peering into the street. On the opposite side were three small shops—a coffee-house, a locksmith's, and a carpenter's. On the flat roofs of the low one-storeyed dwellings there were numbers of Arabs, men and women, but more I think of the latter, squatting in the glaring sunshine. Within the open shops, among the boxes, anvils, and tables, were placed benches, on which were seated native unveiled women, more painted and bedizened, showing more of their features beneath the draped folds of their head-dress, and using their eyes more freely than is customary with Egyptian dames. In the times when men were strangled to death in England in the sight of day, the most ignorant of foreign spectators at our British "custom" could have guessed who and what were the painted, flaunting women that sat in the windows which looked upon the Debtors' Door at Newgate; and so, strangers as we were, we did not need the information of our dragoman to tell us the calling of the women who had paid for the front seats to see men trampled under a horse's hoof. For such, in plain English, is the ceremony of the Doseh—the spectacle we had come to witness.

In front of the shops, and at the foot of the mosque wall, were long lines of benches, chiefly formed of hurdles, on which rows of turbaned Mussulmans sat smoking; in the narrow roadway between the benches was a shifting crowd of men, women, and children, all of the poorer sort; and amidst the crowd there pushed and elbowed a score or so of Egyptian policemen, with fezes, braided coats, baggy blue trousers, and swords fastened to their red sashes, who, armed with canes or with whips of welted rhinoceros hide, kept up ineffectual efforts to clear a passage. As soon as our party had arrived, the canes and whips were brought into requisition; a number of most venerable-looking Mussulmans, who had taken up the best positions for the view, were summarily ejected from their seats; and in spite of a feeble remonstrance on my part, which might have been more effective had the officials understood one word of my protest, we were installed in the place of these native spectators. I doubt whether any process of reasoning could ever have induced a Turkish official to entertain the idea that anybody could possibly object to seeing fellahs ill-treated; and, what is more odd perhaps, the very men who were cuffed and shoved out of their rightful places did not seem to resent the injustice, but squatted down again on the nearest seat they could find

with apparent indifference. Chairs were brought for our accommodation; coffee and cigarettes were offered to us, as a courtesy, by the superintendent of police; and, under the shadow of the mosque, we sat and smoked and waited for the coming of the procession.

Slowly the street filled, and the crowd became denser. During the earlier period of our watching the scene, the water-sellers, the purveyors of sweetmeats, pushed their way along sturdily; donkeys laden with panniers were driven along without much difficulty; women coming home from the bath, attended by their black servants, elbowed a path somehow; and the constables chatted, or took whiffs of tobacco, or stood, with their arms folded, leaning against the wall. By degrees, the throng grew thicker, all traffic ceased, and the switches of the police were brandished fiercely amidst loud shouts, cries, and wrangling. And so, what with the cries of the street hawkers, the babble of women's voices, the gurgling of the smoke bubbles drawn through the water of the narghilé pipes, there ran through the air a constant droning hum of sound. The sun glared full upon the narrow street, save only where, under the shelter of the wall, we had found a strip of shadow. Every few minutes a trumpet sounded in the distance, and there was a stir

and movement in the crowd; but then, when nothing came, the crowd squeezed back again into the centre of the thoroughfare.

The whole concourse of people within our range of vision—that is, within sight of the mosque—I should put down as about two thousand; and I should doubt if five per cent. of the multitude were persons above the class which lives by day labour. The men in silk robes were very few, the women in silk ferighees still fewer; and, except upon the heads of the policemen on duty, a fez was hardly to be seen. Still, judging of these things as a stranger can, I should say that the crowd—if I put aside the ladies of the front stall rows—was respectable enough. Gradually, however, you saw that the centre of the thoroughfare was crowded more and more with a gang of ragged, barefooted, ill-favoured fellows, who shoved and hustled away the former occupants. In a country where drunkenness, in our European sense of the word, is unknown, and where rags and dirt represent things different from what *we* so designate, it is very hard to form any estimate as to the relative social standing of one fellah above or below another. Still, it seemed to me that the gang of half-clad lads who had now got the centre of the roadway to themselves belonged to a lower

grade than any with which my knowledge of Cairo had yet made me familiar—to a caste which corresponds roughly to the scum and refuse of European cities. Most of them were lads, I should guess, between eighteen and five-and-twenty. All were pale, sallow-looking, heavy-eyed, hangdog-faced fellows, of the stamp whose aspect justified the caution of the police to look close to our watches and pockets. But no attempt was made to dislodge the crew from the position they had occupied. They were the main actors in the drama of which we were to be the spectators.

At last, from behind the mosque, we heard the dull beating of drums, and the crowd on either side the street squeezed close up to the houses; and in the space thus left vacant these lads threw themselves face downwards upon the ground. First they lay as they fell—some one way, some another, some parallel to the walls, some at right angles, some sprawling any way; and as they thus lay grovelling in the dust upon their stomachs, and as man after man cast himself down wherever there was a vacant space, edging his way among those who lay beside him, and wriggling so as to get his feet towards the mosque, under whose walls our chairs were placed, the confused mass gradually fused itself into parallel rows,

lying side by side. With each minute the rows got squeezed together closer and closer. A number of amateur packers volunteered their services and began the work of paving the street with these human paving stones. Taking the men by head or heels, tossing them about as if they were bales of cotton, these fellows wedged them in, back to back, arm to arm, side to side, till they lay there as close and tight as sardines in a tin box. From time to time, when the layer seemed to be so close that it was impossible to wedge another in, a man raggeder even and more wretched-looking than his fellows, would fling himself upon this living carpet, and kick and push and struggle to get himself a place. If he were a boy, as was often the case, the khavasses would drive him away with their whips; if he were grown up, they would punch and push the prostrate bodies till they forced open a link in the living chain. Then, as the roadway disappeared beneath this carpet of bodies, barefooted fellows jumped and leaped upon the long line of backs, yelling "Allah el Allah!" I stood so close to the procession that with a stick I could have poked the men lying down without leaving my chair; and I could see the quivering and writhing of their frames as they lay prostrate, waiting for the coming of the Sheikh. They were packed

so close that it must have been hard for them to breathe with their faces half buried in the dust; and friends placed themselves by their heads, stooping, and fanning them with the flaps of their cotton shirts in order to keep them from dying of suffocation.

Then the sound of music came nearer, and the procession began. As a sort of advance guard, there came a mob of half-naked men shouting, yelling, howling. Some whirled round and round, tossing their arms aloft as they whirled; some were foaming at the mouth, others had snakes coiled round their necks, snakes hanging from between their teeth, snakes twisted and squeezed between their hands; some had bare swords, which they brandished in the air. There were men with skewers stuck through their cheeks; men with iron spikes headed with heavy iron balls, who kept spinning the point of the spike upon their palms till the pieces of sharp jagged steel, attached by chains to the ball, began to fly round and round, and then they made a feint to bring the whirling ball so near their cheeks as to slash and gash nose, mouth, and eyes with the revolving blades,—a feint which, however, was not carried into action, as the police seized them, and pushed them on. And, as the harsh strains of the band came sharper and clearer, the yelling grew more frantic,

the shouts more like the inarticulate cries of animals in pain, than like those of human beings. And then the shrieks, yells, and cries were drowned for a moment as the colleges of dervishes came marching past, each with its sacred banner and its band of music. There was a difficulty in getting the long flag-poles under the lamps which swung across the street; a second difficulty, when the first was overcome, of getting the green flag to flaunt out again to the breeze, bringing to mind the Whitsuntide benefit feast processions which you see in country districts. The music, however, had little resemblance to any melody to which the Druids, or Friends in Need, Foresters, or Hearts of Oak have ever marched. Pipe reeds, flat boards struck with a piece of wood, triangular drums, cymbals of brass, iron triangles, combined to make as hideous a confusion of discordant sounds as it has ever happened to me to listen to. I suppose that there was some attempt at melody, but it seemed to me as if the musicians themselves were carried away by the frenzy of the moment, and played upon their instruments as their fingers chanced to fall, while they joined in the yelling shriek of "Allah el Allah!" On they came, troop after troop of green-turbaned dervishes, with their flags and music; and between every two troops there pressed and pushed the

rear-guard of the mad screaming mob which led the way in front. Over the bodies in the street, dervishes, flag-bearers, players, and their followers tramped forward with unshod feet. Then, at the end of the street, appeared the Sheikh himself, mounted on a white Arab steed. Except in a burlesque, I never saw so huge a turban as that he wore. The enormous folds of green muslin were wound round and round his head till the weight must have been hard to support, even if his brain were clear; and the wearer, to all outward semblance, was in a dead faint. He looked like a man helplessly drunk, or drugged with the fumes of tobacco till he had lost all consciousness of where he was, all power of using his limbs. His head, surmounted by its huge turban, hung down helplessly over his left shoulder, his frame kept lolling to and fro, so that he would have fallen off the saddle if there had not been men propping him up on either side; his mouth was open, the saliva was running down from the corners of his lips. The yelling and the shouting had been well-nigh deafening before; but it swelled to a very Babel of shrieks and screams as the white horse and his rider were led slowly on over the pavement of bodies. Tramp, tramp, tramp, the hoofs came down over the prostrate figures; and even amidst the uproar of the crowd you could hear the

dull scrunch as the horse trod on his way. As the Sheikh moved onwards, the men sprang up from the ground on which they lay. Pale as death, half fainting, gasping for breath, writhing as if in mortal pain, they looked one and all as if they were in various stages of epileptic convulsions. Their eyeballs glared out of their sockets; their features were contorted with hideous spasms; they threw themselves about as if they would dash their heads against the stone walls, and struggled fiercely with the friends whose arms were passed round their shoulders to prevent them from falling to the ground. Everybody knows the face and form of the boy possessed by devils who kneels at the foot of the mount, in Raphael's picture of the Transfiguration. Well, among the men over whom the horse had ridden, there seemed to be any number of lads possessed, from whom the devils had not yet been driven forth. I saw men biting the ears, wrenching open the clenched teeth, pulling at the cramp-knotted arms of these epileptic wretches. I heard shrieks, sobs, and groans. The very women in the shop opposite, who had squeezed forward to see the horse trample on the prostrate men, had turned their heads away. The whole scene was ghastly, horrible.

Meanwhile the Sheikh had ridden or rather had been led on along the street, through the courtyard of the mosque,

right up to the entrance of the temple, treading all the way over rows of bodies. After the ride was over, he dismounted, and was supported into the mosque, where he was apparently brought round to his senses with pipes and coffee. And then, after a few minutes' lull, the howling and the shrieking began again. The snakes were twisted aloft, the swords brandished, the spiked balls set a-spinning; the dervishes began shaking to and fro, swinging their heads up and down; the cry of "Allah el Allah!" beginning low, slow, and faint, rose, swelled, and quickened till it resembled nothing but the bark of a yelping cur; and a second edition of the scene in the street was commenced, though without the main incident of the riding over the bodies. Our police guards hinted to us that our presence in the mosque during the ceremony gave umbrage to the crowd; and, for my part, I was glad enough of the excuse to leave the Mussulman fanatics to themselves and get out into the open air.

Was it all real, or was the whole affair a mere make-believe jugglery? This was the question I asked myself constantly at the time, and have thought over often since. On the whole, my judgment is that it was neither all sham nor all genuine, but that there was more of the former than of the latter. Many of the spectators, who

had nearly the same opportunity of judging as I had, were convinced that they had witnessed an extraordinary manifestation of the extent to which men, under strong religious excitement, become callous to pain and insensible to suffering. I confess I do not share their conviction. All through the scene I have attempted to describe I was perplexed by the following reflection. Here we are, a mere handful of Giaours, in the midst of a dense multitude of Moslem fanatics, supposed to be literally mad with a frenzy of religious passion. Our presence as mere lookers-on, in prominent seats, is of itself an offence and outrage to the orthodox faith of Islam; and yet a couple of policemen with sticks are deemed and found amply sufficient to protect us not only from assault, but from insult. Human nature is a strange compound; and English police records will tell you that men and women who are not deterred from suicide by the fear of death will be prevented by the reprimand of an alderman on the bench. Still, if I could get into a state of mind in which I slashed myself with knives, and threw myself under a horse's hoofs to gratify the frenzied ecstasy of devotion, I should not be hindered by the dread of a policeman's bâton from attacking unarmed strangers, whose accursed looks and smiles were an insult to the holy faith for

which I was prepared to risk a cruel death. Now, as it was manifest that, let the passion of the fanatics have been what you will, they had got it sufficiently under control to avoid any demonstration of ill-will towards us beyond a passing scowl, I was led to question further whether the whole exhibition of intense excitement might not be more or less assumed. Many facts I noted confirmed this theory. The men who threw themselves down were, without exception, of the poorest class, and almost all lads of an age when the religious feelings are assuredly not at their strongest. Then, too, it was odd that exactly the number of fanatics was forthcoming that was wanted to pack the exact distance of some hundred yards over which the Sheikh rode, neither more nor less. This may have been a coincidence, but if so it was a strange one. The bodies were squeezed so tight together as to offer a very strong resistance to the pressure of the horse's hoof; the horse stepped as gingerly as a circus steed trained to pick his way between rows of bottles. Whenever it was possible, the attendants brought down the hoofs so that they fell between the legs of the men lying down; and whenever the horse's foot actually came down upon a body, the fleshy part of the back was the part selected for the footfall. Again, whatever pain the men may have suf-

fered internally, it was clear when they stood up that there were no bones broken; not a drop of blood was to be seen upon their clothes, and yet, as their only covering was a thin shirt, you must have seen the blood had it been flowing freely. So, in the same way, neither the men who cut themselves with swords, nor those who pierced themselves with skewers, nor those who gashed their cheeks with revolving blades, had any mark of blood visible. Now religious passion may prevent you from feeling a wound, but it cannot, short of a miracle, hinder blood from flowing if a vein is opened. Moreover, the moment the spasm passed away, the men who had been writhing in agony a moment before seemed as quiet and collected as if they had been listening to a Sunday sermon. On the other hand, I find it difficult to believe the passionate frenzy to have been altogether simulated. If it was so, the acting was finer than any I have ever seen upon the stage.

With the memory of the scene still fresh in my mind, with the sound of the shrieks still ringing in my ears, I took my seat a few hours later at the second festival which was to be performed on the day of "Mooled el Nebbeh." In a luxurious stall in one of the prettiest and lightest opera-houses I have ever seen, I heard the opera

of Rigoletto, and saw the minuet dance in the first act performed by a company of Parisian ballet-girls. It was the opening night of the new Italian Opera of Cairo, which has been built and inaugurated within eight months of the day when the first stone was laid. The state-box was occupied by the Viceroy and the Duke and Duchess of Aosta. Of the East there was no trace visible, except a few fezes in the stalls, and a box covered in with golden wire gratings, from behind which the ladies of the Khediveh's harem looked on the stage. In the morning the Doseh, in the evening Rigoletto—the Sheikh riding over a footway of bodies, the Viceroy gazing through an opera-glass at a European ballet. These things are no bad illustrations of the Cairo of to-day.

THE PYRAMIDS.

SEKHARAH, *November* 3.

A LONG, broad causeway, lined with acacia-trees, leads from the Nile to the Pyramids of Ghiseh. Substitute poplars for acacias, and you have the counterpart of one of the high dyke roads known so well to travellers in the low marsh-lands of Flanders. The ride through the avenue is a pleasant one enough, and yet there is something disappointing in the discovery that the journey to the Pyramids is as easy and straightforward a matter as travelling, say, from Ostend to Bruges. We had started—a party of four—in the early morning from Cairo; but what with dragomans, sumpter-mules, donkey-boys, and hangers-on, we formed quite a small caravan, and the delay in getting ourselves, our donkeys, and our attendants shipped across the Nile in an open ferry-boat, had brought the morning heat well on before we began our scamper over the Delta plain. The waters were still out, though ebbing rapidly; and on either side the road stretched broad, shallow

lagoons, dotted over with streaks of dry land, from which the waters had receded, leaving behind a rich coating of the black alluvial soil. Here and there, also, were patches of land lying a little above the dead level of the plain, which the floods had left uncovered, but which had been soaked and saturated by rills of water; and on these favoured patches there grew already rich crops of young wheat, verdant with a brightness of green, which even pre-Raphaelite painters, in the days of their early zeal, would have hesitated to portray on canvas.

In many parts the floods, which this year have been unusually high, had broken down the dykes. The embankment of the Cairo and Minieh railroad, which runs along the banks of the Nile, had been literally washed away in several places; and some idea of the strength of the current may be gathered from the fact that the rails, suspended in mid-air across the channels which the waters had scooped out, were bent and curved as if they were molten bars twisted by one of Nasmyth's steam lathes. The causeway, however, had sustained but little injury; and such damage as there was, was in process of rapid repair, so that the road might be in readiness for the expected visit of the Empress to the Pyramids. By the time of her Majesty's return there will be no break in the

road, and she will in consequence see nothing of the manner in which the thoroughfare was made good. About a mile from the Pyramids some two hundred feet of earthwork had been swept down by the inundation, and we had to be ferried over the stream. We had time enough, therefore, to see how public works are carried on in Egypt at the present day. The process is simple enough. Men stripped to the skin, and brown as the sand of the desert, stood up to their waists in water, driving stakes into the ground along the line of the embankment. Into the space marked out by these stakes, great sacks filled tight with earth were thrown, and over them were laid layers of heavy stones, and over the stones again more sacks of earth, till at last the surface of the breakwater, thus constructed, rose above the surface. Then on the top of the breakwater basket-loads of earth were poured, stamped, pounded, and trodden down, till at last the break in the embankment was filled up. So much for the system on which the road was constructed; it seemed to me a cumbrous and ineffective method of road-making; but of that I cannot speak positively. What is peculiar to Egypt is the method by which the labour is supplied. The bales of earth and the stones were brought down to the commencement of the gap by long strings of camels, which

knelt when they reached the edge, were unloaded, and then were marched off again to obtain fresh loads from the desert. Their burdens were very heavy, but otherwise they were not ill-treated, so far as I could see. A camel is an expensive animal, and as all the beasts employed were the property of the Government, they were not likely to be ill-used or over-driven. The real labour and toil was thrown upon the shoulders of the unfortunate fellahs whose services had been impressed for the job. Besides the men employed in driving in the stakes and making the foundation, who were evidently workmen of a somewhat superior grade, there were from four to five hundred men, women, and children, whose task consisted in carrying baskets of earth or stones on their heads from the pit, and throwing them down upon the roadway. They were of all ages, from men wrinkled and grey-haired to little children of seven or eight. Men and women were alike bare-legged, with no covering except their loose blue cotton robes—a covering which, in the case of the former, was worn so loosely as to leave the whole body well-nigh exposed. Men, women, and children worked in gangs together, without any distinction of sex or age. Over each gang there was an overseer with a stick in his hand, and subject to him were two or more under-gangers, mostly

lads or biggish girls, armed with switches. The labourers carried their baskets in single file, each gang of a dozen or so being followed by one of the under-taskmasters, who ran alongside the gang, switching smartly any loiterer or malingerer; the gangers, again, stood at points on the bank a little above the path, along which the gang passed, so that they might, whenever they thought fit, deal a smart blow with their sticks on the shoulders of any defaulter in the file, or on the back of the deputy if the gang were not kept up to their work sharply enough. Somebody was always getting whacked, and I don't know whether it was more painful to see great hulking men hitting out at young girls, or to see the girl-drivers belabouring grown-up men and women with their switches. It was the taskmaster's duty, also, to load these human beasts of burden; and if they complained about the weight, down came the stick till they shouldered their load and marched away. Still, truth bids me say that, brutal as the system was, there was more cry than hurt about it all. In the great majority of instances, the blows dealt out with the stick were not such as to cause real pain, or leave a mark behind. In driving horses there is a process called "flicking," which consists in touching up an animal who will not put his collar to the work, without actually hurting him; and I

should say that, as a rule, these luckless fellows were flicked, not beaten. Still, even during the short time in which I watched the scene, I saw half-a-dozen instances in which the gangers were using their sticks viciously, striking hard, and trying to hurt. The sufferers bore it all—hard words and harder blows—patiently enough. Their labour is forced, but they are paid for it; and as for the kicks, and cuffs, and stripes, it is all in the day's work. The stick has been an institution in the country since the days of Menes, and the fellahs only work at the repairs of the road to Ghiseh, just as the children of Israel worked at the building of the Pyramids.

When the ferry was crossed, amidst a crowd of fellahs —who, notwithstanding the terror of the stick, had gathered round us, with their taskmaster at their head, to beg for baakscheesh—we mounted our donkeys again. A short sharp gallop brought us to the outskirts of the Delta, at the foot of the low range of sandhills which fringe the Great Desert, and the Pyramids towered before us. Those, I think, who would view the Pyramids aright, should see them by moonlight, and from a distance. Many of the great wonders of the world—St. Peter's, at Rome, for example, and the Falls of Niagara—grow upon you the more you gaze upon them. When you first peer into the

dome of the temple which was constructed, as the words over the portico declare, "in majorem Dei gloriam"—when you stand upon Goat's Island, and see the river passing over the grandest of the world's cataracts—your first impression is, Can this be all? and it is only as the scene becomes familiar that you appreciate the fulness of its grandeur. It may be so with the Pyramids; but I own that the nearer I drew to the vast triangular piles, which look so stately when seen in the distance, the stronger the impression became that I was gazing at a very cumbrous and misshapen mass of stonework. I am not going to attempt any description of what has been described so often. I fancy that the most accurate and elaborate enunciations of the dimensions, area, and bulk of the Pyramids would convey to you no distinct notion of what the thing is like. Any schoolboy, to use Lord Macaulay's favourite illustration, would be whipped for not knowing that the base of the Pyramid of Cheops is the size of Lincoln's Inn Fields, and that the height is equal to that of St. Paul's Cathedral. But, even with this knowledge, you can form no notion of the structure. When the Pyramids were coated with their covering of polished stone, they must have been more imposing than they are in their present condition, when nothing is left except the

under structure on which the slabs were laid of old. Gazing upwards from the base, you cannot see the apex, nor can you even realize the slope of the huge wall at which you are staring; you only see an endless series of steps, bulging out one above the other. If good, sensible advice were ever listened to, I should strongly urge all future visitors to the Pyramids to content themselves with going up some twenty steps or so, where they will get as grand a view of the Nile and the Desert as if they climbed right up to the top. I have, however, no hope that the advice will be followed. I was as much convinced, before I went up, that ascending the Pyramid was a mistake, as I was clear about the matter when I came down; and yet I went. And any number of generations of tourists will commit the same folly hereafter, even as preceding generations have done it before. If you are fond of climbing—which I am not—and if you could be left to take your own time, and go quietly alone, it would not be much more tiring to ascend the Pyramids than it would be to walk up Highgate Hill. But you might as well expect to explore Holyrood without a guide as to go up the Pyramid without an escort of Arabs. From the moment you reach Ghiseh to the moment you have left it, you are surrounded by a swarm of Arabs, gibbering, begging, bullying, in the

queerest jargon of broken English, gabbled French, and clipped Italian, with which long travel had made me acquainted. I don't believe I should ever have gone up the Pyramid at all, if it had not been for the wish to diminish for a time the number of my persecutors. When you take your time about it, there is no great difficulty in clambering up a broken step some two or three feet in height; but if you have one stout Arab pulling your left arm out of the socket, another wrenching your right arm in an opposite direction, a third heaving you behind, as if you were a sack of flour, and a fourth pulling your feet about, to place them in what he fancies is a right position—you will find the operation unpleasant. The Arabs run you up the Pyramid very much as a London policeman "runs you in," if you object to see Englishmen and Englishwomen treated as the fellahs are dealt with by their taskmasters. There is nothing to be done, except to submit, and so up you go, scraping your knees, puffing, panting, perspiring. More than once I suggested I had had enough, and should be quite satisfied to go down. I might as well have called out to the driver of the Irish Limited Mail that I had changed my mind, and would stop at the first station we came to. I had got to go, and up I went, till at last I was landed on the plateau at the top. The view

was fine—every view from a height in this country cannot be otherwise than fine—but the view from the Citadel of Cairo is infinitely finer; and if you wish to feast your eyes upon the beauties of that glorious Nile Valley, you had far better ride upon your donkey to the brow of the sand cliffs, which rise behind the Pyramids. Moreover, contrary to the ordinary experiences of life, the descent of the Pyramids is harder and more unpleasant than the ascent. I never heard yet of anybody's rolling down the immense flight of steps which lead us to the summit; but the side bulges out so much that, looking down from the top, it seems as though, if you took a false step, you would tumble off into space. Somehow you are lugged down with a succession of jolts and bumps, and a running fire of requests from your guide to buy Brummagen antiques, or to pay for seeing an Arab run up and down the Pyramid, or to give baakscheesh privately, in addition to the amount you have agreed upon for the whole party. I have always been of Sterne's opinion, and hold, with the author of the Sentimental Journey, that the few odd pence and shillings for which you may be overcharged during your travels give much pleasure to those who receive, and cause little loss to those who give. But these Arabs of the Pyramids there is no possibility of

satisfying. You may give them everything they ask, on the understanding that the payment is to be considered a release in full of all claims; and forthwith some other claimant comes forward to say that he has been overlooked, and to demand baakscheesh on his own account. All you can do is to turn a deaf ear to your supplicants; and if you can enjoy scenery while a hundred beggars are whining and grumbling at your side, you must be differently constituted from the present writer.

To all persons intending to visit the inside of the Pyramids I should say unhesitatingly, "Don't." After all, it may be some satisfaction to say you have been up the Pyramid. I do not myself understand the feeling, but I perceive that other persons entertain it. But there is neither difficulty nor danger about going inside the Pyramid. You have to crawl up and down very narrow and very dirty passages on your hands and feet, through very foul and stifling air, to reach at last a small dark room, wherein you are told that there used to stand the sarcophagus of the King Choufou. Not being an antiquary or a *savant*, you are not much the wiser; and when you have crawled in, you have only to crawl out again. I do not write this with any view to supporting the *nil admirari* school; I only say, as a matter of fact, that the Pyramids should not,

in my judgment, be examined very closely. Seen from afar, their vast masses tower so grandly above the dead level of the Delta, that they seem of all human monuments to be the grandest. It is only as you come near that the sense of their size dwindles away—so, at least, it seemed to me; and the Pyramids will remain in my mind not as I saw them on the spot, but as they first appeared to me from the Mahmoudieh, when their sides sparkled and glittered as the sun set across the Desert.

It may be that the eye can take in a smaller object, like the Sphinx, more effectively than a vast expanse of brickwork. But be this as it may, the image of the lion woman impressed me far more than the Pyramid itself. Everybody is familiar with the Sphinx by photographs, pictures, and statuettes but no delineation I have ever seen has conveyed to me the strength of the great massive shoulders, the look of power in the huge crouching figure, the stern, placid beauty of the massive face. The sand has risen round the great figure as it has risen about everything in this Nile country; and part of the monster frame is still hidden beneath the ground; but the head stands forth in its old grandeur, and the sightless, deep-sunk eyes are still haunted by that look of wistful longing which their unknown sculptor gave to them thirty-four centuries ago.

Even in the presence of the Pyramids, beneath the shadow of the Sphinx, you have got to lunch. So we lay under the branches of a solitary acacia, which has lost its way from the Delta, and found some rill of water for its roots even in the midst of the sand. And we sat and slept, and smoked, and tried to solve the problem, which no Sphinx has ever yet disclosed, how four men can play at whist and all win, till the heat of the day was past, and we could pursue our journey to Sekharah, where we were to halt for the night. All along the valley of the Nile in this district there runs a low range of sandhills, not unlike the cliffs of the Suffolk coast, which form the outer rim of the great desert; between their foot and the Delta there lies a streak of broken moorland, half Delta half desert, half sand half field; and along this moorland lay our road. Five miles an hour over rough ground is by no means bad travelling, and yet the ten miles which separate Ghiseh from Sekharah were done in two hours, with no exertion to ourselves, and no apparent fatigue to our donkeys. Where there was turf we galloped, where there was sand we cantered, where there were stones we trotted; and the one pace we could not induce our donkeys or their drivers to adopt was that of walking. So we went on and on, with the bleak sand cliffs on our right, the water-

covered Delta plain, with its palm-tree forests, on our left; and in the distance, across the thin cloud of white fog which told where the Nile lay sweltering, the high rocky heights of Gebel Giouchi. The floods had driven the riverside folk out of their villages, and on the slopes over which we rode the fellahs were camping out. Stockades of reeds had been run up for the women and the cattle; and on the grass the chiefs and elders sat smoking, while the women squatted apart, and crowds of little children, naked as new-born babes, played about on the sand. Unlike the Arabs of the Pyramids, these villagers never asked for baakscheesh, and more than once we were invited by the Sheikh of the village to stop and take coffee and pipes upon our road. Our conversation with our entertainers was necessarily limited; but we bowed and saluted each other with any number of gestures of respect, and puffed our pipes slowly, and sipped our coffee, and made more salutations, till the visit had been extended to the proper length, and then we mounted again, and took our departure with many expressions of goodwill.

But with these delays and the fading light we were kept longer on our journey than we expected, and it was dark before we turned away from the moorland, stumbled up a track which could hardly be called a path to the

plateau, from which the great Desert stretches thousands of miles away into the unknown distance. Our tent had been sent on beforehand; and when we reached the Pyramids of Sekharah, we found it pitched near the deserted house which had been built for M. Mariette when he was engaged in the excavation of the Serapeum. Our guides and drivers slept on the ground round the tent; five Arabs had been appointed to watch over our safety, though I doubt whether their presence might not have been dispensed with; and we slept as securely, though not so comfortably, as if we had been in our beds at home. Sleeping on the ground, however, is wearisome to the flesh; and the desire of seeing the sun rise in the Desert was not the sole or even the main cause which drove me out into the pleasant cool morning air, when the east was touched with the first faint streaks of white, which foretold the approach of daybreak. As the grey light stole over the landscape I sauntered round our tents, wandering at my pleasure about the sand hillocks. I had fancied, from all the descriptions I had read, that the great Desert was a plain, level as the prairies of Illinois and Missouri. But here in this, its outer fringe, it is a long succession of hillocks and valleys of sand. You climb with labour and toil to the brow of one of the ridges which seems to close

the horizon; and when, after slipping back one step for every two you take upwards, you reach the summit of the hill, you find that a new vista of sand crags and sand billows opens out before you. If you could fancy an ocean whose waters were suddenly turned into sand, just when the tempest was at its height, and the whole face of the sea was lashed up into a series of waves and billows, you would have a notion of the Desert, as you see it about Sekharah. But its utter barrenness and desolation were beyond everything that I had ever pictured to myself. There was sand everywhere—sand, and nothing but sand. There was not a blade of grass, not a shrub or tuft of moss, to be seen far or near. And the sand was dry, and fine, and crisp; such as you can never meet with even on the driest and most heat-parched of English sea-shores. Of human, or even of animal life, there was hardly a trace visible. When I had wandered on a little way and lost sight of our encampment, I seemed to be alone in a death-like solitude. Pyramids half-broken down, and looking like huge cairns rather than the ruins of solid masonry, rose from around the hillocks. On all sides were black mounds where the sand lay thicker than on the level; and under these drifts there lay, as I knew, the tombs of countless multitudes of the dead. Here in bygone

ages had been the burying-ground of the mighty city of Memphis; and in all directions were the traces of graves which men's greed or curiosity, or the wear and tear of time, had robbed of their inmates. Bones bleached by the glare of the sun till they were white as chalk, and mouldered away till they crumbled if you touched them, were scattered all over the surface of the sand; everywhere, too, there were strewn patches of worm-eaten rags, fragments of mildewed cloth which had once formed part of the garments in which the mummies were swaddled in their graves. A fox or two, with big bushy tails, could be seen prowling about the sand pits; over the ridges of the hillocks a vulture gloated, flapping his wing slowly as he settled down upon the carrion he had come to devour; and in the distance I heard the howling of a dog; otherwise there was no token of a moving thing—all was lonely, quiet, desolate.

Meanwhile the sun had risen, gilding, as it rose, the mountains on the eastern shore of the Nile with a gorgeous hue of violet pink, such as you see in Egypt, and in Egypt only; and the time had come for our encampment to be broken up. Of the wonders of the Serapeum, of the temple where the sacred bulls of Memphis were entombed in sepulchres built to last for ever, how should I tell you,

unless I could reckon on a patience not to be expected from ordinary readers? I have before me now, as I write, a vision of vast galleries; of huge marble coffins, covered with slabs, such as no mason of our modern time has ever even conceived in fancy; of walls covered with hieroglyphics, of strange figures painted with colours so bright and clear that they seem to have been finished yesterday, of a size and vastness unknown to me before except in the Pelasgic ruins of Italy; and yet the temples and sepulchres I visited are but the outskirts of the city of the dead which lies buried beneath these arid sand heaps. What little has been done in the way of excavation is due to the energy and liberality of the Viceroy. But the work of disclosing the treasures of ancient Egypt to modern eyes is only just begun.

THE STREET FOLK OF CAIRO.

CAIRO, *November* 13.

WHEN you are taken to the Obelisk of Horus, in the city of Heliopolis, you are always reminded by every guide-book, and by every one of your travelling companions who knows how to say the proper thing at the proper time, that Joseph the Patriarch doubtless looked with wonder at the same pillar of stone, whose age even in that remote antiquity was counted by cycles of centuries. I confess that when you have said, in reply, "How interesting!" you have pretty well exhausted the subject. To my ill-regulated mind, a boy with a bag of snakes under his arm, or a drove of camels, affords more matter for speculation than an obelisk; and it is an odd reflection, when you come to think of it, that Pharaoh's daughter, as she went down to the Nile to bathe, Potiphar's wife, the Head Butler and the Chief Baker, must have gazed upon much the same street life, street dress, street folk, as I look on daily

in my wanderings round about Cairo. In the hieroglyphs upon the oldest monuments you can see representations of the same utensils, dresses, features, games, trades, customs, as you behold to-day; and I think, even if you had never heard anything of the immobility of the East, you would know by intuition that the life around you had been going on even as you see it for ages and ages.

The men have the same straight, long faces as you see in the delineations of Egyptian life to be found on the walls of the ancient temples. The Aztecs were said always to betray in their features a family likeness to the Egyptians; and about the streets of Cairo at the present day you meet with scores of stunted, impish-looking, bird-faced children, with whom the Aztecs might claim kinship on the score of resemblance. What the born hue and complexion of the native Egyptian may be it is not easy to tell. Even the little children who roll about stark naked on the roadside are so sunburnt, so caked with coatings of dust, so soaked in Nile mud, that their skin is of the neutral sepia tint which lies half-way between black and white. Indeed, among the street folk here it would be very difficult to draw a hard and fast line between the descendants of Ham and Japheth.

I have seen native-born Egyptians so white and fair that you might have taken them for Anglo-Saxons. I have seen others so swarthy, tanned, and dark that you have to scan their features closely to be sure that they are not of negro origin. It may be the consequence of this infinite variety of skins—from ivory white to ebon black —that in Egypt there is apparently no negro difficulty. Philosophers, of whom I know many on either side the Atlantic, who are fond of expatiating on the inherent incompatibility of white and black, and building up all kinds of elaborate theories to explain why it is that the two races never live, never can, would, or should live, in close contact with each other, would do well to come to Egypt, and see how the problem of the "irrepressible nigger" is solved in the land of the Pharaohs. Between Sambo and the Arab fellah there is no kind of distinction or difference, any more than there is in England between men with blue eyes and men with brown; and the fact that in every gang of labourers, in every group of idlers, in every coffee-house, shop, and store, you see negroes with crisp woolly hair, sparkling white teeth, and jet black skin, adds much to the diversity and variety of the Cairo streets. But for the negro element, with its passion for bright colour, there would be a certain

sameness about the aspect of the Egyptian wayfarers. The fez is confined exclusively to the officials of the Government; the white turban and blue cotton robe are universal; and the sole variety in head-gear is that some of the younger and poorer fellahs substitute for the turban a sugar-loaf-shaped brown felt skull-cap. Of the better sort of women—of those who dress in silks and muslins and wear yasmaks and ferighees—there are not many visible. You never meet in the streets the groups of gaily-dressed Turkish women with flimsy make-believe veils who form so pleasant an object in the alleys of Stamboul. There is no trysting-place of the Cairo ladies like the Valley of the Sweet Waters; and on the promenade of the Choubra Road, where the fashion and quality of Cairo take the air in the afternoon, you scarcely see half-a-dozen carriages occupied by Egyptian women out of the hundreds with which the long avenue is crowded. Driving along this Cairene Corso, it is difficult to imagine you are in an Eastern city. The carriages are filled with English, French, and Italian ladies, dressed in Parisian costume. A good number of the male occupants of the carriages wear the fez, but their dress and features are unmistakeably Frankish; and but for the syces running in front of each barouche, you

would fancy yourself in Europe. In the same way, the Esbekiah, with its hotels, and theatres, and European shops, is European to an extent to which Pera has no claim; while, on the other hand, the moment you leave the great semicircular Piazza, and pass into the network of streets which surround it on every side, you get into a town far more purely Oriental in its character than any portion of Istamboul. Egypt, in fact, is, if I judge rightly, more European, but less Europeanized, than Turkey. The civilization of the West has been transplanted to the banks of the Nile to an extent to which Turkey can show no parallel. But, on the other hand, the Egyptians have not been subjected to the same close contact with Christian races which has done so much to break down the traditions of Islamism; and the result is, that, between the civilized life with which the Viceroy has surrounded himself, and the life of the vast mass of his subjects, there is a complete and sharply-defined division.

Thus it happens, at Cairo, that, though you live in a European hotel, after European fashion; though you take your drive along a European promenade; though you may go to Italian operas, French plays, and Parisian *cafés chantants,* you are yet in the midst of a civiliza-

tion which, to judge from the delineations on the walls of the Temple of Serapis, has changed but little since the days of the Pharaohs.

It is this contrast which to a tourist makes the charm of Cairo. After luncheon at your hotel, for instance, where you have pale ale and mixed pickles, Harvey's sauce and Keiller's orange marmalade, on the table—after a smoke in the reading-room, where you find nothing but English newspapers, and hear nothing but English spoken, and have your coffee brought to you by waiters in shabby black coats and whitey-brown ties, who might pass muster in an English hotel—you are driven out in your open carriage to see the performances of the Howling Dervishes. You pass through a narrow stone passage, with a soldier or two stationed in it, into a courtyard surrounded by wooden galleries, and protected from the sun by an awning hung from wall to wall. In one of these galleries you find most of the travellers with whom you have just lunched at the hotel, and take your seat amongst them. In the courtyard below the howling has commenced. At one side of the court there sit, cross-legged, half-a-dozen musicians playing on tambourines, flutes, and drums. Round the three remaining sides stand, close to each other, some thirty

men howling and bowing to the utmost of their power. They are of all ages, from a bright-eyed, smooth-faced lad of ten, to a wrinkled grey-haired old man of seventy. They all wear heavy muslin turbans, most of them green in colour, and as the motion of the nodding becomes more rapid one turban after another falls to the ground, and their long, matted, thick hair tosses about their faces as they bend and drop their heads. An aged dervish, who acts apparently as master of the ceremonies, walks slowly round and round, urging the performers to increased exertions. A low, monotonous chant is kept up by the dervishes, and as the cadence swells and ebbs their motions keep time to the air. To throw your body about without moving your feet, to let your head drop as if your spine were broken, and then to jerk it backwards with a sudden spring, as if your body were a leg with a joint at the knees, and to keep meanwhile shouting out some gibberish of prayer without pausing to take breath—this is the duty of your howling dervish. Faster and faster went the chant of the singers, quicker and quicker the jerking and bobbing, louder and hoarser the guttural, panting shriek of prayer, till suddenly one of the company, who had distinguished himself by the vehemence of his gestures, tottered out of the ranks

into the open, threw up his arms with a scream, and fell backwards on the ground as if in a fit. His brethren gathered round the man, raised him up, and set him on his legs, panting and gasping for breath; and then the performance was over, this dropping down in a dead faint of one of the dervishes being the regular termination of the service. The turbans were put on, the score or so of Arabs who had squatted round the courtyard sauntered away, and the dervishes went home to rest till the next Friday, when the performance would have to be gone through again. I am quite prepared to admit that there may be some kind of religious enthusiasm in this peculiar worship; but I am, I own, sceptical as to the possibility that any set of men can work themselves up regularly into a state of religious frenzy at 1.30 P.M. every Friday throughout the year.

The Dancing Dervishes supply a more elegant though less sensational exhibition, for the edification of the faithful. When the howlers have finished their performance, the dancers commence theirs. To spin round and round, like a teetotum, with your arms stretched out at full length, the palm of the right hand being held up towards the sky, the palm of the left hand down towards the ground, is the especial talent for which these der-

vishes are famous. Their long petticoats are weighted round the rim, so that they spread out as if they were stretched over crinolines, as the dancers spin round and round. The step to which the men dance is very like that of the old Trois Temps waltz; and I should say that every Viennese student could waltz down the Cairo dervishes, the longest of whose spins never exceeded five minutes. For the first quarter of an hour the spectacle of these men, with their tall white felt caps and their downcast eyes, their tight jackets and their bulging petticoats, was curious enough; but the sight soon became monotonous. Apparently, the natives had found out the fact that the show was not an amusing one; for, if it had not been for the European tourists present, there would not have been half-a-dozen lookers-on; and even the beadle, whose function it is to drive off with a stick the urchins who tried to peep through the open windows and see the show gratis, had pretty much a sinecure. I may be wrong; but I fancy that the howling and dancing business is as much played out in Egypt as spirit-rapping and table-turning are in England.

But the real shows of Cairo are not the dervishes, or the snake-charmers, the magician, or the exhibitions of legerdemain, the description whereof forms part of your

traveller's regular stock-in-trade. It is the sights you stumble across, and are not taken to see, which to me are the charm of Cairo. The wedding processions are a never-failing source of delight. First comes a band of music—banjos, tambourines, and cymbals. Then come the mummers, rising in number from two upwards, according to the wealth of the bridegroom's parents. Every few minutes the mummers stop and go through their performance, for the entertainment of the guests. Then come horses, on whose high saddles are perched little boys decked out in gilt and spangles, who have just undergone the ceremony of circumcision in honour of the day. Next follow the bridegroom and his friends, walking in twos together in the bravest of their garments; and behind them walk the women, with their faces closely veiled, the bride being distinguished from the rest by a canopy of silk, which is held over her head. Numerous dancing-girls and singing-women close the procession. It is pleasant, too, in the evening, when the work of the day is over, to see the groups of men who squat in front of the coffee-shops listening to the story-tellers. To the accompaniment of a guitar, strummed by the assistant, who sits beside him, the story-teller spins his yarns; and a running chorus of

grunts, which, I suppose, correspond to the parliamentary "Hear, hear," shows when the lecturer has hit his public. Very little reliance can be placed on the information you derive from dragomans; but, whenever I have asked what was the subject of the recitation, I have been told by my informant that it was about the days before the foreigner ruled in Egypt. Can it be that any touch of the nationality fever has made its way into the fibre of the fellahs? Then there are the boys with performing goats, the boys who carry snakes in a pouch slung round their neck, and twist them about, as if they were pieces of cord, for the delectation of the passers-by. And, in the outskirts of the town, you cannot fail, especially on market days, to come across yet odder incidents of life in Cairo. You see a knot of people collected, and find the singing-girls plying their trade. Their faces are barely covered; their foreheads, ears, and necks are decked out with pieces of gold; their painted eyes are used freely; and, even without knowing a word of what they sing, you can tell from their leers, and from the laughter of the men, as each point is emphasized by proper or improper gestures, that the lays are of the kind which you hear sung by gipsy girls on English racecourses. However this may be, there is nothing ever

seen in England, or for that matter in Europe, analogous to the dances which you may see performed here in the public streets by dancers, male and female. Miss Harriet Martineau, in her Eastern travels, remarks that the Egyptians, in their public spectacles, are addicted to the worship of Organism. I don't know how you can allude more delicately to a most indelicate exhibition. What is at once curious and painful to witness is the intense delight with which these parodies of profligacy are received by the crowds of men, women, and even children, who squeeze in a circle about the performers. Happily there are shows enough in Cairo without the dancing-men and dancing-women; and indeed you hardly want shows at all in a place where everything and everybody are to you the most novel and curious of spectacles.

FERDINAND DE LESSEPS.

PORT SAÏD, *November* 7.

I HAVE said but little as yet of the Suez Canal. Before I had pursued my researches in Egypt long, I came to the conclusion that to repeat the stories related to me, and still more the anticipations expressed by my various informants, would only be giving a wider circulation to gossip, always idle, and for the most part malevolent in its character. I think Pontius Pilate would have been less severely criticised for his scepticism as to the existence of truth, if his critics had realized the fact that he was a European living among Orientals. I cannot conceive of a life more calculated to weaken your faith in veracity than one passed in Turkey or Egypt. Everybody assumes, as a matter of course, that everybody else is cheating his neighbours, that the obvious explanation of any act cannot possibly be the real one, and that some mysterious and discreditable intrigue is always at the bottom of all apparently straightforward dealings. This being the settled rule

of life, it is not strange that an enterprise which has threatened so many interests, offended so many vanities, and given birth to so many jealousies as the Suez Canal, should have been, and should still be, the subject of infinite mis-representation, intrigues, and delusions. Apart from the instinct which impels all dwellers in Eastern lands to attribute underhand motives to every undertaking, there were certain exceptional causes, which have, I believe, obscured the judgment of foreign residents in Egypt as to the true prospects of M. de Lesseps' enterprise. In the first place, the canal, if it prove successful, will interfere with the trade of Alexandria, with the Overland route, with the established lines of traffic throughout the Isthmus, and with the importance of Cairo as a commercial capital. It may prove—I think ultimately it will prove—that all Egyptian interests will profit immensely by the new channel between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. But this is, after all, only a matter of opinion; and it is not in human nature that merchants, traders, bankers, and hotel-keepers should look favourably on a project which will jeopardize the undertakings in which their own fortunes are embarked. It may be said that this explanation for the disfavour with which the Suez Canal is undoubtedly viewed among the English colony in Turkey

and Egypt can apply only to the commercial section of the community; but then it must be remembered that the official world is necessarily affected by the public opinion of the resident traders, and also that the Suez Canal has unfortunately been regarded as the battle-ground between French and English interests. You must have lived, as it has been my lot to do at different times, among English residents in a foreign land to understand the intensity of English prejudices. There is a good side to the intense individuality of our nation; and I have no doubt no small part of our greatness is due to the fact that the Englishman abroad is more wedded to English ideas, more proud of English institutions, more convinced of English supremacy, than the Englishman at home. On the other hand, this individuality keeps us, when abroad, strangers in a strange country; and in consequence, among all English residents in foreign countries, and more especially in Eastern countries, there exists a determination to assert the superiority of England over every other land, and more particularly over France, which is almost unintelligible to the ordinary Briton of the present day.

So it has come to pass, that as the canal was a French work, carried on by French capital, constructed by French engineers, and patronised by the French Government, the

Anglo-Egyptian world set their faces dead against the scheme, and determined with one consent that the canal never ought to be made, that it never would be made, and that, if made, it could never be kept open. All this is intelligible enough, though I confess the animus displayed in the matter is bitterer than I can account for. Considering that the work, if carried to a successful issue, will be an immense boon to humanity, it would be better perhaps if our countrymen in the East were less ready to catch at every unfavourable rumour, and less candid in the expression of their desire that it may prove a failure. However, you must take men, and above all, Englishmen, as they are; and I know my own people well enough to be sure that, if once the success of the enterprise is established, they will be the first to profit by it. Still, the partisan feeling that has been introduced into the question of the Suez Canal renders the opinion of the British and French residents about equally untrustworthy; and, as they are the only people who take the trouble to form an opinion at all, the inquirer after truth is compelled to rely mainly upon his own observation. From putting together the different accounts I have heard, and from what I have now seen myself, I have formed an opinion of my own as to the prospects and position of this great

undertaking. I give it not as the opinion of an expert, but of a disinterested observer. But before I speak of the canal let me say something of its founder and creator.

Ferdinand de Lesseps will never see sixty again. I am afraid for his sake he will not be long in seeing seventy; and judging from his look of health, strength, and energy, I have every reason to hope he may see any number of years more. He belongs to a type of old men—if I may apply the word "old" to a man apparently in the very prime of life—whom you meet with only in France, and chiefly in the south of France; a type which, if I remember rightly, Thackeray mentions in the Newcomes as one of the handsomest he knew. Hair as white as snow, a complexion clear and red as a rosy apple, dark flashing eyes, and a black moustache, make up as handsome a face as you would wish to see. A spare, short, lithe figure, clear-cut features, small hands and feet, a smile of excessive sweetness, add to the charm of M. de Lesseps' appearance. There is something English about his scrupulous neatness and simplicity of address; and, indeed, as he told me the other day, his family were originally of Scotch extraction, having come over to France with James II. A Lesseps, Scotch readers may be curious to learn, was the architect of the cathedral at Edinburgh (St.

Giles's). His father was sent out to Egypt as consul by Napoleon I. after the Peace of Amiens, with orders to select a candidate for the Pashalik who would counteract the influence of the Mamelukes who were favourable to England, and by his advice Mehemet Ali received the support of the French Government. His mother was a Spaniard, and by her he is not a very distant cousin of the Empress of the French; and the young lady whom he is about to marry as soon as the fêtes of this month are over is a British subject, having been born in the Mauritius. But the most noteworthy feature about the man is his wonderful *bonhomie* of manner—cordial without fulsomeness, frank without familiarity, friendly without suspicion of insincerity—which I, for one, have never seen equalled. I cannot understand anybody's not being at his ease with Lesseps. I can still less understand anybody's taking a liberty with him. I dwell upon this fact because I am told, and can readily believe, that this singular grace of manner, this sweetness of disposition, have contributed in no small degree to the triumph of his enterprise. His absolute confidence of success, his unvarying spirits, his dauntless energy, and his power of inspiring a feeling of personal regard among all persons with whom he came into contact, have carried him through difficulties,

delays, and disappointments which would have worn out the heart of any ordinary man. It is only fair, too, to say that, among the numerous charges and insinuations I have heard brought against the projector of the Suez Canal, I have never, in this country, where he is known, heard the assertion made that he has sought to make any private profit for himself. With endless opportunities of enriching himself, he has been contented with the by no means exorbitant salary he has received from the company; and if, as seems to me probable, the shareholders lose their money, they will have the consolation, such as it is, of knowing that it has not gone into the pockets of their manager. As an illustration of the energy and vitality of the man, let me mention the disposal of one of M. de Lesseps' days during the greater part of which I had the pleasure of being in his company. At half-past eleven at night, he, being then in Ismailia, received a telegram which recalled him to Cairo. A special train was ordered, which brought him to the capital, a distance of a hundred miles, by four in the morning. The hours before daybreak were spent in arranging the papers and documents he had to submit to the Viceroy. An audience at the palace, and various business interviews, occupied his time till one, when a special train took him back to

Ismailia. During the whole of the four hours' journey he talked without intermission to the occupants of the carriage, of whom I was one. On arriving at Ismailia he mounted his horse, a very spirited Arab, and rode off to inspect the works. At seven he had a dinner-party of some twenty persons, at which he was the most talkative and most animated of the persons present; and when I left him, late in the evening, he was just beginning his work of inspecting the reports of the day's progress. It is possible that M. de Lesseps may be an enthusiast; but I am convinced he is neither an adventurer nor a charlatan.

BEFORE THE OPENING.

SUEZ, *November* 10.

FOR the last four days I have been cruising about the Suez Canal. With the exception of one interruption, about which I shall speak presently, I have passed without a break from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. The result of my observations has been to convince me that the Canal is a success. Let me, however, explain shortly what I mean by the word "success." If the opening of the Canal depended upon the permission of an Inspector of the Board of Trade, I think there would be very little chance of any traffic's passing over the route for weeks or months to come. I do not feel sanguine as to the prospect that the passage from sea to sea will be effected without hitch or breakdown on the 17th; nor should I be in the least surprised if after the opening the Canal had to be closed practically, if not nominally, in order to complete the excavations. But I have no doubt that ships drawing sixteen feet of

water can, and will, pass henceforth from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. Whether the number of ships which will find it worth while to pay the charges required for the passage of the Canal will be sufficient to make the enterprise a remunerative one is a fact which experience alone can determine. M. de Lesseps himself calculates that the receipts for the first year will be twenty-five millions of francs; that of this amount five millions will be required for repairs, five for the working expenses of the Canal; while the fifteen millions left will suffice to pay a dividend of five per cent. On what data this calculation is based, and how far they are correct, is a matter on which I can express no opinion.

One striking testimony to the apparent success of the Canal is contained in the fact that, somewhat contrary to my expectations, there is very little to describe in passing through it. No doubt, given a certain experience in writing, it would be easy to make any number of columns out of the narrative of one's journey through the Canal as it would be to produce a like amount of letterpress about one's journey through the Watford Tunnel. But, when you have said that for some hundred miles you sail along a broad ditch, with high sand-banks on either side, over which at rare intervals you catch glimpses of a sandy

desert, you have given a picture of the Canal proper, the details of which you may arrange and re-arrange as you like, but of which the outline, foreground, and background must remain the same throughout. I think, therefore, the best thing I can do is to write out in full such stray notes as I have taken down during my journey from Port Saïd to Suez.

Port Saïd, as seen from the Canal, is a bright, flourishing town, bearing, like all the towns on the Canal, a striking resemblance to the newly-settled cities of the prairie. Upon the map it possesses squares, boulevards, theatres, churches, and streets without end. In reality, its half-finished rows of houses end for the present in the desert. Still, there is room enough to build a city at the mouth of the Canal as large as Alexandria. The only serious obstacle to the prospects of Port Saïd as the site of a great city is the absence of fresh water. The town is supplied with drinking-water from the Canal des Eaux Douces at Ismailia, where two engines of 25-horse power are at work night and day pumping the fluid through iron pipes to Port Saïd, a distance of forty miles. Before long it will probably be necessary to prolong the canal which carries the waters of the Nile from Cairo to Ismailia to Port Saïd —a work which, like many other improvements needed to

complete the undertaking, can be effected only at a heavy outlay. The harbour, however, about whose construction such doubts have been expressed, is now an accomplished fact. Two converging stone piers have been built out into the Mediterranean from the coast, the longer and more westerly of the two being a mile and a half in length, the shorter about a mile and a quarter; the distance between the lighthouses at the ends of the two piers is half a mile. English and foreign naval officers who have inspected the harbour agree in saying that it is superior to Alexandria as a port; and the inner docks are now crowded with large large steamers and sailing vessels, the French flag being naturally predominant. Nor have there been any signs as yet of the predicted silting-up of the harbour. Along the western pier there is, indeed, a constant accretion of sand from the deposits of the Nile; and it is said that a sort of sandbank is thus gradually forming itself along the mole. But, at its present rate of deposit, very many years must elapse before the shoal reaches the mouth of the harbour; and in that event there will be no difficulty in extending the piers. So, at least, the partisans of the Canal declare. At any rate, the risk of the harbour of Port Saïd's being choked with sand is a remote one, and may be dismissed from consideration for the time being.

From Port Saïd to Kantara, a distance of twenty-eight miles, the Canal runs through Lake Menzaleh. So the map states, and the statement is true, though not in the sense which the words would convey to ordinary apprehension. Lake Menzaleh is the largest of the sheets of water with which the charts of the isthmus are studded over; but then this lake is nothing more than a shallow lagoon, whose waters were of no practical service towards the formation of the Canal, but were positively detrimental. Of all the portions of the undertaking, this one—M. de Lesseps assures me—was really the most arduous, though it attracted the least attention. A trough had to be dug through the bed of the lagoon; on either side this trough high sandbanks had to be erected, and the difficulty of making a solid foundation for these sand walls was found to be extreme. The difficulty, however, has been surmounted; and there is no appearance of the embankment's being worn away by the action of the water, or of any filtration or mingling of the waters on either side. Throughout this section, from Port Saïd to Kantara, the Canal is finished. I do not mean by so saying that no further work may be required on this portion. All I mean is, that the contracts for cutting the section are held to be performed, that there are no works going on along it, and that the

channel is clear from all obstructions. In consequence there is here not much to note. The average width from bank to bank is about that of the Thames at Mortlake; in the centre there is a track a hundred yards wide, marked out by poles stuck in the water, with little flags floating from their tops, which show the course ships passing through the Canal are to follow. Within this track there is—so the engineers of the company assert—a minimum depth of eight mètres, or about five-and-twenty feet: and the officers of the Peninsular and Oriental Company, who have recently taken soundings, agree in thinking that a vessel drawing twenty feet can pass along this reach with perfect safety. The reach, I should add, is as straight as an arrow, and there is therefore no difficulty, as there is in other portions of the Canal, about keeping within the track. The vessel I made my journey in was a little steam-launch, employed in the postal service of the company, which had been kindly placed at the disposal of our party. Even from the roof of its deck cabin it was impossible in most places to look over the top of the banks; and therefore the journey was necessarily more monotonous than it would be if the Canal were traversed in a large steamer. Still every now and then we caught sight of the broad lake beyond the banks, and of the desert further on.

The waters were covered with flocks of wild ducks; white pelicans stalked about the shallow marshes; on the horizon were lines of trees and rows of white houses. So at least the testimony of our eyes assured us; but the sailors declared that what we saw was only the mirage of the desert: and as it would have been a most surprising fact if there had been either trees or houses in the position where we saw or seemed to see them, I have no doubt they were right.

At Kantara the Canal crosses the track of the highway between Cairo and Syria. A floating bridge carries the caravans across, and even while we waited to take in water long strings of camels led by Bedouins came down to the water's edge. Some day or other Kantara may be a flourishing city. At present it consists of two small restaurants, the Hôtel de la Poste and the Descente des Voyageurs, where you are served with indifferent food at Boulevard des Italiens prices. From this halting-place to El Ferdane, that is, to the southern extremity of Lake Ballah, the Canal still passes through a sand cutting raised within a mere. The lake, however, though a considerable sheet of water on the map, is in reality almost dried up, and therefore the construction of the Canal was comparatively easy, the sand not being immersed in water as was

the case in Lake Menzaleh. In the section which is still incomplete, the "couloirs," without which the enterprise would never have been conducted to a successful end, were in full operation. According to the original programme, the canal was to have been constructed by forced labour provided by the Viceroy. I have spoken already about this system of labour, in which the stick plays so prominent a part; and I should be most unwilling to say one word in its palliation. As a matter of fact, however, it is right to state that the "corvée" has been for ages, and is to the present day, the mode in which public works are constructed in Egypt; and that Turkey, of all Powers in the world, is not assuredly the one to object to its application. To any one who knows the fact of the case, it is impossible to doubt that the real object of the veto which the Porte placed upon the employment of forced labour in constructing the Canal, at a time when the works were in full progress, was to place an insuperable obstacle in the way of its completion. It so turned out that the tactics which were intended to deal a deathblow to the enterprise secured its success. With spade labour the trench could probably not have been dug; but the necessity of substituting machinery for manual labour led to the invention —or perhaps I should more truly say to the adaptation—

of the machines by which the work has been carried out to a successful issue. In its general character, the process of construction can be explained without much difficulty. A rough trough was first dug out by spade work. As soon as the trough had been dug to the depth of six to twelve feet, according to the character of the ground, water was let in. It was often urged beforehand, as an objection to the Canal, that the sand would not hold water. It was found, however, by experience that the effect of the water was to harden the sand into a sort of paste comparatively devoid of any porous character. The testimony of my own eyes is sufficient to convince me of the improbability that the bottom of the Canal will require either puddling or paving. The real question—to my mind almost the only important question—as to the success of the Canal, is whether its width is sufficient to enable vessels of any burthen to sail through it without risk of accidents. My own impression is that the channel will have to be doubled in breadth before the Canal can be used as a maritime thoroughfare. The cost of such widening the chief contractor, M. de Lavallé, estimates at two millions and a half sterling; while he calculates the expense of keeping the present cutting clear from silting-up at forty thousand a year.

To return, however, to the process by which the present trough has been constructed. After the water had been let in, the steam dredges were floated down the stream, moored along the bank, and set to work. These dredges are of two kinds. The great "couloirs" consist of a long, broad, flat-bottomed barge, on which there stands a huge framework of wood, supporting an endless chain of heavy iron buckets. The chain is turned by steam, and the height of the axle is shifted from time to time; so that the empty buckets, as they revolve round and round, shall always strike the bottom of the Canal at a fixed angle. As they are dragged over the soil, they scoop up a quantity of mud and sand and water; and, as each bucket reaches its highest point in the round, it discharges its contents into a long, open, iron pipe, which runs out at right angles to the barge. The further extremity of this pipe stretches for some yards beyond the bank of the Canal; and, therefore, when the dredging is going on, there is a constant stream of liquid mud pouring from the pipe's mouth upon the shore, and thus raising the height of the embankment. When the hollow scooped out by the buckets has reached the required depth, the dredge is moved to another place, and the same process is repeated over and over again. These stationary dredges, however,

though very effective, require much time in moving, and the lighter work of the Canal has been chiefly effected by movable dredges of a smaller size. These machines are of the same construction as those I have endeavoured to describe; the only difference is, that the mud raised by their agency is not poured directly on shore by pipes attached to the dredges, but is emptied in the first instance into large barges divided into partitions, and moored alongside the dredge. Each partition contains a railway truck, and when the barge is filled it steers away to the bank, where an elevator is fixed. The trucks, filled with mud, are raised by a crane worked by steam-power, and placed upon inclined rails, attached to the elevator, which slope upwards at an angle of forty-five degrees towards the bank. They are then drawn up the rails by an endless rope, and as each truck reaches the ends of the rails its side falls open; the mud is shot out upon the bank, and the empty truck returns by another set of rails to the platform on which the elevator is placed, and is thence lowered into the barge to which it belongs. As the elevator can unload and reload a barge much faster than the dredges can fill it with mud, each elevator is fed by half-a-dozen dredges, and thus the mud raised from the Canal by several dredges is carted away without difficulty

at one and the same time. As these floating dredges are much easier to shift than those encumbered by the long couloir pipes, the work of excavating the bed goes on much more rapidly. But in places where there is any great mass of earth or sand to be removed, the large couloirs can scoop out a given volume in a shorter time.

South of Kantara the dredges are very busily at work; and the channel of the Canal is blocked up with such numbers of steam barges, dredges, and elevators that, as you approach it from the north, you seem to be entering a very labyrinth of gigantic cranes, poles, pipes, and revolving chains of buckets. But as you draw nearer you find that every machine is working quietly and steadily, and you pass the monster machines one by one without stoppage or delay, till, after a time, you find yourself again in clear water at the southern extremity of Lake Ballah. Indeed, what struck me most here—as in every other section where the works were still proceeding—was the perfect order, quiet, and lack of confusion which characterised the works. Though when I sailed along the Canal there were only six clear days to its formal opening, and though Cairo was rife with stories of several mishaps which had occurred, or were said to have occurred, during the last week, there was not a symptom anywhere of the

works being carried on in a hurry. Everything seemed to go like clock-work. From El Ferdane, at the end of Lake Ballah, to Lake Timsah, a distance of about five miles, the Canal has had to be cut through the sand of the desert. The sand is so fine and shifting in this part—as it is everywhere, so far as I have seen, in the real desert —that you would have said beforehand that any trench cut through it would have fallen in at once. This has not proved to be the case. In the first place, the action of the water, as I have already explained, has given cohesion to the sand; in the second, the lower stratum of sand has been found to be far harder than the surface; and, in fact, the lower banks of the land look as if they had been cut through sandstone. This particular section was excavated mainly by spade labour; and at the height of the work nearly sixty thousand men were employed upon it, thirty-five thousand working by day and twenty-five thousand by night. The sand, as it was dug out, was carted away by a temporary railroad, portions of which may still be seen on the banks, and was thrown out into the desert, where it has raised up great ridges of sand. The banks, however, at this part are very steep, and the quantity of sand rubbed off by the wash of the steamboats is far greater than in places where the slope of the shore is

gradual. Moreover, the channel is very narrow and its course tortuous. It will be necessary to lower the slopes, to straighten the course, and to widen the channel.

In the days of the Pharaohs, I suppose, there was really a lake at Timsah; but till the other day it was a barren sandy hollow, with a few shallow pools of water, across which you could ride without the slightest risk or difficulty. Filled as it is now with the waters of the Mediterranean, it forms a pretty inland salt sea lake. On the northern shore stands the town of Ismailia. The Viceroy is building a very handsome stone palace upon the banks; the Governor, too, has a palace; there is a fine railway station, a large hotel, and a few villas occupied by the *employés* of the company; but the town as yet consists of only a few streets of low wooden houses, chiefly stores and cafés, and an infinity of shanties and huts. Till a very few years ago the desert stretched over the site of Ismailia, and not a living soul was to be seen except a stray Bedouin who chanced to pitch his tent there for the night. But since the construction of the Sweet Water Canal from the Nile to Lake Timsah, vegetation has sprung up on every side, and in the gardens of M. de Lesseps' villa you may see orange-trees and acacias tall enough to afford shelter from the noonday sun. At Lake

Timsah are to be the head-quarters of the land works, and the depôt of the company, while vessels passing up and down will cross each other in the waters of the lake. Altogether Ismailia is likely to turn out a very improving locality, and any speculative contractor who bought up building lots round about the shores of the lake would find, I think, that castles built upon sand are not always unremunerative.

Through Lake Timsah the course of the Canal is marked out by buoys; and through the greater part, if not the whole, a rough bed was cut out before the waters were let in. The Canal enters at the north-east corner, and, after sweeping round at a wide angle through the mere, leaves it at the south-east. From Timsah to the Bitter Lakes the Canal again passes for eight miles or so through the desert. But this portion was constructed at a later period than that from Timsah northwards; and the dredges were more used here than in the above-named section. The slopes are lower, the width greater; and the work, when finished, will be of a more satisfactory kind. The misfortune is that the work is still very far from being finished. The dredges are plied hard scooping out the bed; but this scooping ought to have been completed long ago, and the urgent necessity of setting the dredges in

motion without delay has led to the only serious mishap which has hitherto befallen the completion of the Canal. As soon as the channel had been cut through the sand to a certain depth, it was resolved to flood the reach, and thus allow the dredges to be brought into operation. Before the waters were let in the soil was probed; and it was decided, after a very hasty examination, that there was nothing in the bed which could not be raised by the dredging buckets. The water was admitted; the machines were set to work; and everything went on satisfactorily till one day last week, when the dredgers suddenly struck on something hard; and, on sounding, it was found that right in the middle of the channel there was a layer of rock, about eighty feet in length, lying at from twelve to fourteen feet beneath the surface of the water. Forthwith the dredging had to be stopped, in order that the sunken rock might be blown up with powder. In consequence, strict orders were issued that no boats, not on urgent business of the company, should be allowed to pass the landing-place of Serapeum, opposite to which the obstruction had been discovered. It was said that the object of this veto was to hinder the miners from being disturbed in their work; but I suspect the reluctance of the contractors to have people prying about the spot had a good deal more to do

with the prohibition. If the subordinate officials of Ismailia could have had their own way, we should certainly not have been permitted to go down to Serapeum. But M. de Lesseps' determination that our party should see everything overruled all objections, and we were taken up to the spot on board one of the small postal steamers. A large strong-built raft, supported on barges, was moored right over the sunken rock. From this raft men, armed with long iron poles, drilled holes in the stone. A charge of powder was lowered into the holes thus drilled, through a hollow cylinder, and the blasting powder was set alight by a wire connected with an electric battery. At the time I was present no explosion took place, so that I could not judge of the practical efficiency of this somewhat cumbrous process. But on the bank there were great masses of stone which had been torn away from the rock by the powder, and which were piled up, pending the arrival of the barge which was to carry them out to the Bitter Lakes. The stone was of a very soft, porous kind, which crumbled in your hands if you squeezed it hard.

Even, however, when the rock is cut away, there is a good deal of dredging still to be done in the Serapeum section. Luckily, the dredges will need to traverse no

long distance before they reach Lake Timsah, where they can be moored out of the way in safety. I don't think I have mentioned that one of the many pieces of work which have to be done before the opening is the removal of the steam dredges from the channel. These enormous flat-bottomed barges, with their huge cranes, wheels, and conduit pipes, can only be moved slowly. The bays with which the course of the Canal is dotted on the map, and in which vessels are to take refuge if any difficulty arise about passing ships going in a contrary direction, exist upon paper only; and the only place where the steam dredges, or for that matter any other craft, can now be safely moored out of harm's way, are at Port Saïd, in the docks at Suez, or at Lake Timsah. The latter place is to be the chief station for the dredges, and from its proximity to Serapeum the floating machines, which will be set to work as soon as the blasting is finished, to clear away the deposit, will have no great distance to traverse when their work is over. From the more distant sections of the Canal the dredges are already coming in, and, with the exception of a few which are anchored in places where the channel is unusually broad, the whole dredging fleet will be in harbour before the opening day.

From the top of the banks at Serapeum you look down upon a great expanse of water. The Bitter Lakes, in fact, lie almost at your feet. Our steam launch was not permitted to pass the point where the blasting was going on, so we had to make a détour, and continue our voyage through the canal in another steamer.

I do not suppose that the portion of the Canal through which you sail over the Bitter Lakes presented nearly so many difficulties of construction as the sections where a trench had to be cut through mud and sand drift. But it impresses you more than any other with the extraordinary magnitude of this gigantic enterprise. A few months ago the desert stretched over almost all the area now covered with water. At the bottom of the hollow, in which the mere is enclosed, there was a marsh of very brackish water from which the title of the Bitter Lakes has been taken. Now, in lieu of the desert, there is an inland sea twenty-five miles in length and six to seven miles in breadth at its broadest point, which has been created by tapping the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. Many will remember that the feasibility or non-feasibility of constructing this inland sea was one of the points most vigorously contested; but all the potent arguments by which it was shown that the Bitter Lakes could not

exist, are refuted by the plain fact that they do exist. The only difficulty experienced in filling the basin arose from the rapidity with which the water poured in. The basin was first filled with water from the Mediterranean up to the level of low water at Suez, and then the Red Sea was let in. With a view to breaking the flow of the tide which came rushing in, a dam of uncut sandstone had been left across the Canal, near the southern mouth of the lake, and the water of the Red Sea was conducted round this dam by trenches, and allowed to trickle slowly down the sloping shores into the lake. Some time, however, before the flood had reached its level, the dam gave way, and the tide swept in with a resistless current. The barges and dredges in the Canal below the lake were all carried away from their moorings; and the work of dredging had to be stopped for a week, till the damage done to the dredges could be repaired. Since the two seas have joined their waters, a strong current has set in from south to north, but of any eddy or fall at the meeting of the waters there is now no trace. The tide runs up the Canal from Suez with great force, there being a difference of six to seven feet between high and low water; but it is lost in the Bitter Lakes. The colour of the current is green, unlike that of the portion of the Canal fed by the

Mediterranean, which is blue. Since the lakes have been filled, there has been a fall of five degrees Centigrade in the mean temperature of the district round its banks. One odd fact told me is that, though the Canal literally swarms with sea fish, the fish of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea keep to their own ends of the channel. About the northern end of the Bitter Lakes the water is so extremely salt that apparently the fish decline to pass through it. The bed of the Bitter Lakes is the only portion of the Canal's course in which it has not been necessary to make a cutting. The track to be sailed over is marked out with buoys; but, in the major portion of the lake, it is held that vessels may sail wide of the course thus indicated without danger of running aground. How this may be I have no means of judging; our steamer darted to and fro about the lake without paying the smallest attention to the buoys, but then she drew only four to five feet of water. If a vessel should get aground in the lakes, the difficulty of getting her off will be greater than in the Canal, where posts are put up at short intervals along the banks, to which ropes can be fastened to warp round any ship which gets into trouble.

After the long, weary journey through sixty miles of

sand cutting, where the blazing heat of the sun is intensified by the glare and glitter of the sand, it is a great relief to sail out upon the broad, open waters of the Bitter Lakes, with the grand expanse of the desert stretching away across the shores, right up to the foot of the high, rocky hills which enclose the northern end of the Red Sea. On quitting the lakes you re-enter the Canal. The first ten miles from the mouth towards Suez appear to me the most thoroughly completed of the whole distance. There was not a dredge to be seen; the villages of wooden huts, of which there are such numbers on the banks, run up for the workmen, were completely deserted. The labourers had been paid off, and the work was held to be done. The case was very different in the last section of the Canal across the lagoons of Suez. In a distance of about a mile, I counted seventeen dredging machines in full work; the course for ships, traced by flags stuck in the middle of the Canal, is narrower than I had even noticed it before.

The Canal widens considerably as you approach the sea. The piers at the mouth had to be carried out much farther into the water than had been expected, but at present the channel leading from the Canal into the Red Sea is as good as could be wished, and there is no indication of

any bars being formed at the mouth. After quitting the Canal, you cross the neck of the Red Sea to reach the great docks which the company have erected on the western coast. The Cairo and Alexandria railroad has been prolonged for a distance of two miles, and is carried through the sea on an embankment which lands the trains close to the docks and quays of the Canal. The line is absolutely finished, but is not yet used. As soon as it is open, passengers by the Overland route will be able to embark from the train on board the steamer in the same way as you do at Dover, and will thus avoid the troublesome transshipment of themselves and their luggage by means of boats and tenders. I cannot but fear that, with the opening of this extended line, the glory of Shepherd's Hotel will depart from it, and that the place of that world-known caravanserai will be taken by some hotel situated nearer to the landing-place.

During my progress through the Canal from Port Saïd to Suez, I had the advantage of making the expedition with two English officers who had considerable experience in engineering works, and their opinion coincided with my own as to the fact that the *ultimate* success of the undertaking was now assured. It has been shown by actual working that the waters of the Red Sea will flow

into the Mediterranean; that a canal can be formed which will hold water; and that there is no accumulation of sand which cannot easily be removed by dredging. Given these conclusions, it is clear that the Canal can be and will be made. Whether it is actually made now is a matter on which I cannot speak with certainty, and till the test of practical working has been applied, it is impossible to say more than that the company are acting as if they credited their own assertions.

THE OPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL.

ON BOARD THE FAYOUM, PORT SAÏD, *Nov.* 16.

EARLY this morning I was leaning over the gunwale of the *Fayoum*, peering out into the labyrinth of ships with which the harbour of Port Saïd is crowded, when I espied, shooting out from under the bows of the *Massourah*, the Viceroy's yacht, a boat in which a man sat stooping. As the boat glided by, the solitary passenger looked up, and I recognised the face of the man by whom this port, this vast concourse of vessels, this gathering of crowned heads, this great enterprise had been called into existence—the face of Ferdinand de Lesseps. He looked very worn, tired, and haggard. Last evening I had seen him presiding at a dinner given to the representatives of the Chambers of Commerce; and all through the night he had been hard at work. For him, surely, to-day must seem wearily, drearily long. To-morrow is to be his Waterloo; to-morrow is to decide whether the enterprise to which his life has been devoted will prove a colossal

success or a gigantic failure. It is true, as I have written often before now, that the passage or non-passage of the inaugural flotilla across the Isthmus will not absolutely determine the issue whether the Canal is or is not an accomplished triumph. But the personal reputation of Lesseps is staked upon the outturn of to-morrow. He has summoned the world to witness the end of a mighty achievement; the summons has been accepted; and even a man as daring, as sanguine, as confident of success as the creator of the Suez Canal, may well feel anxious, if not discouraged, during the last few hours that precede the drawing of the lottery in which so great a venture has been embarked.

Something of that same feeling of trepidation must, I think, be felt by all who are spectators of this strange duel between the engineering energies of man and the forces of nature. At the gambling tables of Germany, when a gamester is playing high against the bank, the deal of the cards is watched with a feverish anxiety by lookers-on who neither lose nor win a sixpence whether it is *rouge* or *couleur* which is called out as the last card is turned. So it is with me; and writing, as I do now, within a few hours of the final determination of the problem whose solution has so long occupied the thoughts

of the world, I do not feel inclined to indulge in calm speculation as to the chances in favour of or against success. Sufficient for the day is the news thereof; and, for the present, I shall content myself with recording the gathering of the personages who are to take part in to-morrow's pageant—the prelude to the drama upon which the curtain is to rise with the coming daybreak.

Yesterday was to be the first trysting day at Suez; and on Sunday evening, just as the sun set, the good ship *Fayoum* sailed out of Alexandria harbour, having on board some hundred of the Viceroy's guests. I hear no lack of complaints as to the mismanagement and want of organization which have characterised the conduct of the various arrangements for the accommodation of the invited. *If* the stories I hear be true, these complaints are not altogether ill-founded; but, so far as I am concerned, I have no grievance of my own to allege. As an old traveller, I have learnt that, if you take things quietly, you are pretty sure to fall upon your legs; and so far I have had no ground to repent of my conviction, that the managers of the enterprise are more likely to know what arrangements are most suitable for their guests than are the guests themselves. The *Fayoum*, a splendid paddle-steamer, of 2,000 tons, in which the Viceroy's harem used

to be transported every summer to the Bosphorus, in the days when goodwill reigned between the Khediveh and his suzerain, had been set apart for the transport of persons who, like myself, had received invitations from the Egyptian Foreign Office; and, though numbers of my fellow-guests were convinced that they would gain some unknown advantage by getting passage on other boats, I resolved to stick to the *Fayoum;* and I found my reward in so doing. It was blowing great guns as we lay in the port of Alexandria; the departure of the *Aigle,* the Empress's yacht, was delayed till the Monday, and the *Fayoum* was the only one of the Government vessels which put out to sea. The miseries of a rough passage are the same everywhere; and it was a glad sight for all the passengers on the *Fayoum* when the day broke, and we discovered the low, sandy coast of Africa rising above the outer line of the watery horizon. As is universally the case with all vessels manned by Arab crews, our captain was at sea, metaphorically as well as literally; and we made Damietta in lieu of Port Saïd. At last, however, the twin lighthouses which mark the entrance to the new port of the Mediterranean rose into sight, and behind them we descried a perfect forest of masts. We reached the harbour in about eighteen hours from our

departure from Alexandria, and entered—our vessel drawing sixteen feet—without difficulty. Scarcely, however, were we in smooth water behind the breakwater, when we were ordered out again by the harbour-master's boat, through some unintelligible mistake, and were kept pitching and rolling in the roadstead for another hour, when at last we received the welcome signal to make for the port. About half a mile to the east of the pier the British ironclad squadron lay at anchor. Why they had taken up that particular position, or why they had not entered the harbour, were questions on which the English passengers speculated much, as we sailed under the grand black walls of the *Bellerophon*, the *Prince Consort*, the *Lord Warden*, and the *Caledonian*. As soon as we could communicate with the shore the puzzle was explained, though not altogether satisfactory. Since our ironclads drew twenty-eight feet, they could not cross the bar at the mouth of Port Saïd, and the intention was that they should cruise about in the offing. Unfortunately, two of the four men-of-war stuck upon a sandbank. According to the current reports here, the fleet steamed up to the roadstead without a pilot, and ran aground upon a shoal which has been caused by the discharge of the dredgings from the harbour, and is not yet marked upon the charts.

The occurrence is annoying, as, with men-of-war of all nations crowding the harbour and roads, the British fleet moored out at sea, and with half its squadron stranded on a sandbank, occupies a somewhat ludicrous position. However, as it was not ever intended to have the Royal flag of England represented in the flotilla of men-of-war which is to sail up the Canal, the mishap is of less importance.

From the extremity of the piers, which have been run out into the sea to form the harbour, to the mouth of the Canal, is a full mile and a half, and for the last two-thirds of this distance the *Fayoum* steamed slowly through a double row of men-of-war and transport vessels. Whatever may be the defects of Port Saïd as a harbour, it is shown that it can afford safe anchorage for some hundred vessels, varying from between five hundred to two thousand five hundred tons in burthen. These ships were moored at right angles to the piers, with their sterns close to the shore. It is worthy of note, also, that almost all these vessels made good their entrance during one of the stiffest gales you can well encounter in the waters of the Mediterranean. There were ships of every nation—Swedish, Dutch, Belgian, Italian, Greek, Spanish, French, Russian, English, and American; and, though the Union Jack was everywhere to the fore, the one flag conspicuous by its absence was

the Royal Standard of Great Britain. As we entered the port, the ships were all dressed with flags, the yards were manned, and the waters were covered with the white puffs of cannon-smoke. Even our Arab crew fired off one gun with great fuss and bustle, in order, as the captain informed us in his quaint, broken English, to be "much polite." Just before our arrival, the Emperor of Austria had arrived at Port Saïd on board the Imperial yacht. The Crown Prince of Sweden, the Prince Royal of Holland, had already put in their appearance. On our first arrival we took up our station next to the Viceroy's steam yacht, the *Massourah*. According to the original programme, the Royal guests are all to sail together in the *Massourah* through the Canal, in order to do away with all difficulties as to precedence. It is reported, however, to-day, that the length of the *Massourah* has been found an objection, and that the Viceroy and his guests are to go in a smaller steamer, the *Latif*. However this may be, it would be difficult to find a grander vessel to carry a shipload of Royalty than this magnificent steam yacht, which was built for the Khediveh by Messrs. Samuda.

As we took up our station, the Emperor of Austria was returning the visit which the Viceroy had paid him upon his arrival. It was a gay scene enough. The water was

crowded with men-of-war's gigs plying to and fro; and amidst this flotilla of boats, Arab dhows, laden with troops of Bedouins, in all the gorgeous hues of Eastern attire, sailed up and down. The Viceroy and the Emperor stood upon the midship deck, looking out upon the harbour, and after a few minutes' conversation they lit cigarettes. Then the Imperial anthem was played by the Viceregal band, and Francis Joseph took his departure amidst the cheers of the sailors who manned the yards of the various men-of-war. After the interview with the Emperor, the Khediveh received the visit of Lord Alfred Paget and some other English gentlemen, who have come out in the *Principe Tomaso*, a steamer which had been placed at their disposal by the Adriatic-Oriental Company. There was luncheon on board for all who called to pay their respects to the Viceroy; and the band played various national airs during the forenoon, "God save the Queen" and "Partant pour la Syrie" being those most in favour. The evening passed over without any incident of interest, the only event of the night being a ball on board the *Massourah*, at which the Emperor of Austria was not present.

This morning we were waked early by the sound of cannon; and all day long our ears have been deafened

with the roar of guns fired from every ship around us, till the very teeth in one's head rattled with the jar and clatter. It was the arrival of the Empress of the French which gave the first signal for this avalanche of noise. The *Aigle* had sailed from Alexandria at noon yesterday, and, being a very swift sailer, her coming had been expected at a much earlier hour than that at which she appeared in the offing. It was close upon eight o'clock before the black hull of the yacht, with its yellow beading, its taper masts, and its bee-bespangled flags, entered the harbour. The British fleet, which was now once more afloat, was the first to welcome her Majesty. Then as the *Aigle* glided on, ship after ship responded to the challenge; and, amid guns firing, flags waving, men cheering, the *Aigle* took up its position on the larboard of the *Massourah*, the Emperor of Austria's yacht occupying a like position on the starboard. The Empress stood upon the hurricane deck, and bowed repeatedly in response to the cheers with which she was greeted.

Throughout the morning salutes were fired, as visits and return visits were paid from one royal personage to another; and it seemed to me that the seamen on the various ships-of-war must have passed at least two hours out of three upon the yards. At three the religious func-

tion took place which was to inaugurate the opening of the Suez Canal. Upon the shore to the west of the harbour three kiosks had been erected for the ceremonial. The centre lodge nearest the end was reserved for the Khediveh and his royal guests; the one to his right was set apart for the Mussulman Mollahs; the one to his left for the priests of the various Christian persuasions. It had been intended that the priests of all faiths should offer up their prayers together; but this plan, intended to unite the ministers of religion in one common act of worship, had to be abandoned as impracticable. The kiosks, unlike the gorgeous structure which the Sultan erected at Beykos as a resting-place for the Empress while the Turkish troops marched past, were almost bare in their decorations. Within a few minutes of the appointed time the royal personages took up their stations in the centre kiosk, and seated themselves on arm-chairs turned towards the Mediterranean. The front row of eight seats was occupied in the following fashion:—On the extreme left, looking seawards, sat Prince Louis of Hesse, next to him the Prince Oscar of Sweden, then the Crown Prince of Prussia, the Emperor of Austria, the Empress of the French, the Khediveh, the Princess of the Netherlands, and in the right-hand corner Mr. Elliot, as

representative of England. Prince Frederick William was dressed in the Prussian uniform, and wore the Grand Cordon of the Osmanlieh; as also did the Emperor, who had on, as usual, his white Austrian Jäger uniform, with the cocked hat surmounted by the plume of green feathers. The Empress looked handsomer, I think, than I have ever seen her—and that is saying a great deal. Her dress was of mauve silk, covered with deep flounces of white lace; and though I had the good fortune to stand very near her, I should never have dreamt, had I not known to the contrary, of describing her as having passed the age of the *femme de trente ans* which Balzac held to be the apogee of female loveliness. The Viceroy had the Medjidieh and the Cordon of the Legion of Honour fastened over his Turkish uniform, and looked tired, and, if I may speak the truth, sleepy. Behind the front row of royalists were any number of princes, diplomatists, ladies-in-waiting, equerries, and courtiers. Amidst the crowd of uniforms, the plain black coat of M. de Lesseps and the white Arab bournous of Abd-el-Kader stood out strangely conspicuous, not so much from their contrast with the gilt and braid around them, as from the marked individuality of their wearers.

On either side the royal kiosk were side lodges, filled

with any number of black-robed Armenian and Coptic priests; and between the centre kiosk and the smaller ones, where the religious ceremony was to be performed, was a motley crowd of all nations, the only nationality not represented being that of the natives of the soil. The proceedings commenced with a prayer or address read in a low voice, from a written paper, by a Mollah with a green turban, accompanied by half-a-dozen aged sheikhs, who, like their spokesman, seemed ill at ease. Of the foreigners who crowded round the royal stand, not half-a-dozen probably understood one word of what the Mollah was reading; and the loud conversation they kept up during the recital of the Mussulman prayer was excused by the fact that the Khediveh chatted with the Empress during the whole time of its delivery. When the Mollah had concluded, a score or more of Greek priests, in gorgeous robes, entered the right-hand kiosk, where an altar had been raised up, with a cross—not a crucifix—in front, and rows of wax candles, and commenced a long sing-song chant, varied by endless genuflexions, crossings, and bowings, the chief part of the service being performed by a venerable-looking, grey-haired old man, the Patriarch of Alexandria. Then the ships in the harbour fired off rounds upon rounds of salutes; and when at last the firing was ended, Mon-

signor Bauer, the chaplain of the French Imperial Court, stepped forward on the platform as the representative of the Catholic Church. A young, fresh-looking ecclesiastic, with the purple cape and beret of a Pontifical Prothonotary, he scarcely looked equal to the duty which had been assigned to him of being the real spokesman of the ministers of religion. But when his clear, rich voice was once heard ringing forth distinctly and slowly across the shore, no doubt could be entertained as to the wisdom of the choice which had assigned to him the leading part in the ceremonial. This, so far as I can recall, was the brief outline of Monsignor's speech: "The solemn hour has come. On this wonderful shore, beneath this marvellous sky, we are met to celebrate the accomplishment of a world's marvel. At last there is accomplished this great undertaking of all nations. An era is marked in the history of mankind. From the farthest portions of the globe we are gathered to celebrate this epoch of time. The glorious East, the wondrous West, salute each other. This is a holy day of humanity. A horizon more vast than all known horizons opens out before us. It is, no doubt, the material grandeur of this undertaking which first impresses the spectator; but its material grandeur is as nothing compared with its moral greatness. The

ideas, the manners, the morals, the language, the faiths of two continents will henceforward mingle together across this channel which unites two seas. You men of all races gathered together here symbolize by your presence the future brotherhood of mankind. It is a giant's task you have come to celebrate. All honour then to the conquerors in this glorious battle of peace which to-day has been fought and won. *The Canal is a success, an accomplished fact.*" The speaker then paid compliments to the Khediveh, saying that East and West saluted Ismail Pacha as the regenerator of Egypt; to the Empress of the French for the noble sympathy she had shown throughout the enterprise; to the Emperor Francis Joseph for the encouragement he had given by the act of his presence. He then made an apostrophe to Lesseps, as the Columbus of our own time and as the personification of French enterprise, courage, and genius, a passage which called forth a ringing cheer; and he concluded with a hope that this great enterprise, which was destined to cement so many material interests, would raise the minds of all who witnessed its completion to the thought of a federation of mankind on earth, to that yet higher and wider brotherhood which awaits them in the world to come.

The address was somewhat lengthy—a little magniloquent, perhaps—but yet it was not unequal to the greatness of the occasion, and the applause with which it was greeted at its close was not of a merely formal character. Then the Greek popes sung a sacred chant, the cannon thundered forth again from the sea, and the ceremony was over. The royal party walked down from the kiosk to the quay, preceded by a procession of the workmen of the Canal, bearing flags. The Emperor of Austria led the way, giving his arm to the Empress of the French; the Viceroy followed, with the Princess Royal of Holland on his left, and Abd-el-Kader on his right; and the other princes and potentates came behind, mixed up together. There was no attempt at any special pomp or show. In the evening the ships in the harbour were illuminated; there was a display of fireworks of no particular brilliancy; and to-night the one thought in everybody's mind is, What will the morrow bring forth? Were Monsignor Bauer's bold declarations of success a mere rhetorical artifice, or are they the harbingers of a real triumph? To-morrow will tell.

FROM PORT SAÏD TO ISMAILIA.

ISMAILIA, *November* 17.

As I write, the telegraphic wires are carrying to Compiègne a message which will take precedence of all other communications. The message is addressed by the Empress of the French to the Prince Imperial, bidding him, on receipt of the telegram, to write himself and congratulate M. de Lesseps on the success of his great work. It is not often that Royal messages may be accepted with such entire good faith as the one which tells the tidings of to-day's achievement. No matter what difficulties may arise in the further prosecution of the journey from sea to sea, the Canal, as an engineering work, is an accomplished success. The problem of piercing the Isthmus has been solved. For the first time in the world's annals, vessels of large burthen, sailing from the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, have crossed each other's path in the midst of the Desert; and even if the Canal should utterly fail as a commercial undertaking, the name of Ferdinand de Lesseps

will be remembered in history as the author of one of the world's wonders—as the founder and creator of the Suez Canal. In the presence of so grand an achievement of human energy, an achievement so full of promise for the interests of our race, a man must have a very narrow nature who could avoid sharing in some measure in the exultation with which this brilliant success has been received by all persons interested in the undertaking. I own also, cordially, that I derive something of a personal sense of satisfaction from the fact, that the issue of the enterprise has been such as I predicted in these letters. That the opening of the Canal was sure to be a complete and utter fiasco was the assured conviction of all the British residents, and of all the engineering authorities among the crowd of visitors with whom I have had the fortune to come into contact. It required a certain amount of resolution to oppose the opinion of an unprofessional observer like myself to that of numbers of men who had far greater practical knowledge both of the country and of the mechanical conditions of the problem. I claim no credit for superior acuteness. The one ground of my belief was the simple conviction that the men who had charge of the work were not likely to pledge their words to misstatements whose falseness, if they were false, must neces-

sarily be exposed in a very few days by the evidence of fact, and this belief has so far served me in good stead. But it was hard at times not to swerve from my faith; hardest of all during the hours which immediately preceded its justification.

Last night I received an invitation from Nubar Pacha to accompany him upon the *Mohammed Ali*, an Egyptian steam frigate, which, according to the latest arrangements, was to lead the way in the progress through the Canal. All through the evening Port Saïd was full of unfavourable rumours. Something had gone wrong; there was a hitch somewhere; the Empress was about to return straight to France; the opening was to be put off; and so on. It was impossible to trace any of these reports to a trustworthy source, yet the unanimity with which they foreboded evil was a sure sign that things were not going well. There was little sleep last night in Port Saïd. Midnight had long passed before the lights were put out on board the men-of-war, steamers, and yachts with which the harbour was crowded; and the first faint grey streaks of dawn had not yet shown themselves in the east before the lights were lit again. Everybody was on foot betimes. Sleep was impossible while steam whistles were shrieking, bugles blowing the *réveillé*, chains clanking, boatswains

piping up their crews, engines snorting, anchors heaving, and drums beating. Even in Egypt the early mornings are grey, cold, and cheerless, and everything looked dismal enough as we rowed across the harbour through the vast fleet of ships, whose monster hulls and taper masts loomed phantom-like through the dim gloaming. When we reached the *Mohammed Ali*, it was obvious that there was a screw loose somewhere. Great preparations had been made for the entertainment of the guests who had been invited to sail on board the pioneer ship; numbers of servants had been draughted off from the other vessels to wait upon the company; great piles of champagne cases, luncheon hampers, sardine boxes, and blocks of ice were stored upon the deck. The ship was in gala costume, but nobody knew what the arrangements were to be—the anchor was down. Nubar Pacha, the most courteous of men, was not on board to receive his guests, and there were no signs of starting. We were ordered to be on board before six at the very latest; but the morning stole on, the mist vanished before the sun, and still we lay at anchor; and though every vessel in the harbour had its steam up, they all lay still and motionless. Men-of-war's boats were shooting from ship to ship. Salutes were fired at intervals, as one Royal personage after another passed

along the harbour in search of the craft that was to convey him through the Canal. No information could be gathered from any person in authority, except that no orders had been received; and the minutes went by, and still Nubar Pacha failed to make his appearance. At last, some time after seven, two small steam launches, and a tug boat about half the size of a Thames steamer, moored themselves alongside the *Mohammed Ali*. The Minister of Foreign Affairs jumped on board from one of them, apologized for having kept us waiting, and then told us, without the slightest attempt to conceal his disappointment, that an Egyptian Government steamer, the *Latif*, had stuck fast in going up the Canal, while trying to pass the night before; that it was impossible for the *Mohammed Ali* or any large vessel to get by the stranded ship, but he had got the steam launches ready to take us on our journey. Of course, where it was impossible for us to pass, the large ships which were to convey the Royal visitors must also be stopped. The Canal would have to be opened by a procession of boats; the whole affair, as it seemed, was destined to be a complete, almost a ludicrous, fiasco. However, there was nothing to be done, except to put a good face on a bad business. It was high time that we should be off. Passengers, luggage, and refreshments were

bundled, as fast as might be, from the *Mohammed Ali* into the launches, his Excellency Nubar Pacha and M. Guichard, the chief engineer of the Canal, working as porters themselves to stir up the Egyptian servants to something like activity, and the passengers giving such help as lay in their power. The attempt, however, to treat the matter as a good joke was not much of a success. Our merriment was very hollow, and our entertainers were too much down in the mouth at the mishap, which, as we thought then, had marred the whole affair, to pretend even that they treated the matter lightly. In reply to some question as to the way in which the accident had occurred, a very high Egyptian official on board the *Mohammed Ali* shrugged his shoulders with the remark, "My dear sir, this is how we always do manage matters in this country;" and there was no more to be said, except to repeat the commonplace, that things always mend when they are at their worst.

There was no possibility of disguising the magnitude of the apprehended disaster, had there been any wish to do so, as even the score or so of trunks which the guests had brought with them had to be carefully allotted amidst the launches and the tugs, for fear any of the craft should draw too much water to get round the obstruction in the

Canal. Of course there was not wanting amongst us the class of Job's comforters, who had known all along that something of this kind must happen; and even friends of the enterprise loudly expressed their irritation at the supposed obstinacy of M. de Lesseps, who had positively refused to defer the opening till the Canal had been actually traversed by some vessel of large burthen. It was said—with what truth I know not—that the Viceroy had got so nervous at the possibility of the Royal fleet's running aground in the Canal, that he had insisted on the *Latif's* being sent up on a trial trip at the last hour. However this might be, the one thing we knew for certain was, that the first vessel of any size which had tried to pass through, had stuck fast in the middle of the Canal fourteen miles after starting, and that of itself was enough to justify the worst apprehensions of failure.

Swiftly and silently our little flotilla of steam-launches stole out of the harbour, as if we were ashamed—as, I think, most of us were—at being the forerunners of a fleet of boats, and proceeded up the long straight reach which leads from Port Saïd to Kantara. In the hurry of our departure, we had come away without knives and forks, or glasses, while others had neither wine nor victuals, and there was a little feeble merriment as we drew up along-

side each other, and tossed what we wanted in turn across the water; Nubar Pacha's launch and other boats terminating the exchange by a brisk fire of apples and sugar-plums from board to board. Breakfast occupied a certain time not unpleasantly, but when we had done that, there was nothing to do and very little to be seen. Conversation fell flat; to most of us this section of the Canal was wearily familiar, and even had it not been so, a sail through high sandbanks, over which you cannot see anything except the glaring cloudless sky, is not in itself inspiriting. So we sat, smoked, dozed, and speculated idly upon the chances that the opening might be deferred, and that our advance fleet would not be followed by the Royal visitors.

About ten miles beyond Port Saïd we espied the high masts of the *Latif* rising in the distance. Then her hull appeared, and, as we saw that she was right in the centre of the stream, our worst apprehensions seemed fulfilled. If she had only struck upon the banks it would have been bad enough, but here, as it looked, she had run aground in mid-stream, in the very deepest and most ample portion of the whole Canal. After a time, however, we noticed with surprise that the hull, instead of becoming more distinct, grew, if anything, fainter in outline, and at last

the sanguine members of our small expedition entertained a surmise that the *Latif* was moving. The idea was at first scouted by the majority of the company, but gradually it gained adherents, and ere long we saw a small steamboat coming rapidly towards us at full speed with flags flying. "The *Latif* is off!" was shouted to us in English from the paddle-box of the steamer as we shot past her, and before we had finished our answering cheer, the steamer was far away, carrying the news down the stream. A short time afterwards we came up with a white steamer, as large perhaps as a Gravesend packet, moored alongside the bank, from which it was just being pushed off by poles. On deck was the Viceroy, whose face was beaming with satisfaction, and who bowed and waved his hand as we passed, cheering lustily. His Highness had left Port Saïd early in the morning, to see if anything could be done to remedy the disaster, and was now about to pursue his journey on to Ismailia, the *Latif* being fairly afloat, and the tug which had pulled her off having now left her to pursue her way. It seems that in her voyage up-stream the *Latif* had run foul of a barge, and that, having to swerve out of the course, her double screw twisted her right across the channel, and her bows got embedded in the sand.

The encouragement, however, which our spirits had received by the clearing of the passage was not destined to be very long-lived. When we reached Kantara, where the one bay yet finished or even begun upon the Canal is situated, we found that the *Latif* had not been allowed to continue her voyage, but was safely moored alongside the bank. The inference naturally drawn from this fact was that it was not deemed safe for her to pursue her voyage; and, as the *Latif* is of far smaller burthen and draught than the *Aigle*, or any of the vessels on which the Royal guests were to be conveyed, we could only jump to the conclusion that the idea of a ship procession had been abandoned, as being too dangerous to be risked, and that the progress through the Canal, if made at all, would be made in boats. So we went on in not much better spirits than before. The utter desolation of the Canal was in itself depressing. For miles upon miles we saw no living creature, except a fellah fishing in the stream, or a Bedouin riding on a camel along the heights of the sandbanks. At the "Gares," the stations for taking in water, where there are generally a few workmen's huts, and a water-side tavern—stations which occur at fixed intervals of ten kilomètres—were gathered little groups of people, mostly European workmen and their wives.

Flags had been hung up, and everybody was in his brightest attire; but it was reported along the Canal that the inaugural procession had had to be virtually abandoned, and the sense of failure depressed even the most indifferent of the spectators. When I last passed through the Canal, barely a week ago, the dredging machines were at full work; and there was visible all the life and activity inseparable from the prosecution of any great undertaking in which thousands of workmen are employed. But now all was changed. But very few of the dredges were left; the boats, barges, and steam tugs had disappeared; on the half-dozen dredges still left moored along the banks the works had stopped, the wheels were still, the very engine fires were out. At noon to-day the contract for dredging the bottom of the canal came to a close; and the workmen, still clustering upon the dredges in their working clothes, remained there only to see the show of the opening. The job was ended, and yet, as we fancied then, by a strange irony of fate, on the very day on which the Canal was reckoned so certain of completion that the workmen had received notice to leave weeks beforehand, it was found that no vessel larger than a steam wherry could make its way through the channel.

It was only as we entered the winding channel which debouches on Lake Timsah from the north that the prospect began to brighten. The promontories of which I spoke last week had been cut down, and the water flowed over the ground thus added to the Canal, so that an appearance of considerable width had been given to the narrow channel. Crowds of gaily-dressed ladies, and of Arabs, whose garments were of yet brighter hues, sat upon the slopes of the sandbanks; mounted horsemen galloped about, conspicuous amongst whom I noticed Monsignor Bauer, the orator of yesterday's ceremony. Triumphal arches had been raised; wreaths of leaves and flowers had been worked into mottoes—"Vive l'Impératrice," "A l'Union de l'Occident et de l'Orient," and so forth. As we passed under the banks black with people, we were saluted with cries that the Empress had started in the *Aigle,* and we retorted with shouts that the *Latif* was afloat. But still, I confess, we did not feel very confident about the truth of the intelligence; and, even admitting its truth, it was still, as we thought, more than doubtful whether, if the *Latif* could not proceed beyond Kantara, the *Aigle* would be able to reach Lake Timsah. The lake was covered over with a flotilla of "dahabiahs," as the Nile boats are called, steam launches,

and other Lilliputian craft, all decked out with flags, all filled with gaily-dressed holiday folk. Troops were stationed on the brow of the low sand-hills; the shores were covered with endless rows of white tents; the water's edge was fringed round with double lines of lookers-on. Still the mere presence of this great gala multitude had little bearing upon the issue, whether the ship procession was really coming through the Canal; and the Egyptian officials by whom our expedition was accompanied seemed disposed to place little faith in the alleged telegrams, which were reported to declare that the Empress had already passed Kantara in the *Aigle*.

From early morning the crowd had been waiting for the coming of the Empress, and still, though the afternoon was fast waning, not a puff of smoke could be discerned in the direction of Port Saïd. There was little chance that the *Fayoum*, the vessel on which my luggage was placed, would arrive that night; and my first care was to secure a lodging. Under ordinary circumstances it would have been a hopeless endeavour to seek board and shelter in a little town of perhaps ten thousand souls, which had just received an influx of twenty to thirty thousand visitors. But the thoughtful hospitality of the Viceroy had proved equal to the emergency; and though no prepara-

tion had been made for the visitors who came through the Canal, as the intention was that they should sleep on board their respective vessels, I had a tent, with bedding, provided for me, where in this warm climate any one at all used to roughing it could spend the night, not only comfortably, but luxuriously. It would be ungrateful if I did not say a word here in acknowledgment of the excellence of the commissariat arrangements. A number of large wooden sheds have been run up, in which open table is kept for all persons who choose to avail themselves of the opportunity. In the shed in which I dined there were places for at least five hundred guests. No questions were asked; no tickets were demanded. You had only to enter in, and you were served with a dinner of many courses, far better than any you would get at most *tables d'hôtes* upon the Continent. Wines of various kinds, and all drinkable, were furnished *à discrétion;* coffee, cigars, and liqueurs were served after the meal; and the waiters not only did not ask for, but refused to accept any remuneration. These public restaurants, with their two meals a day, are to be kept open during the three days of the fêtes, and I regret that the hospitality of the Viceroy should have been taken advantage of by hundreds of persons, including no small number of my fellow-

countrymen, who had no more right or claim to regard themselves as the Khediveh's guests than I have to look upon myself as entitled to live at the expense of the Queen of England.

By the time I had got my billet and had found my quarters, it was getting towards evening, and the sun was very low in the west. When I got down to the coast of the lake, where the crowd had grown denser and closer ever since I passed through it a couple of hours before, already the tide of public feeling had turned, and strangers were beginning to congratulate each other on the success of the Canal. The reasons of this change in popular feeling were manifest enough. At the Suez mouth of the Canal, leading into the lake, there lay two steamers of the Messageries Impériales, which had come up straight from the Red Sea; and across the desert by El Guisr to the north, you could see, through a dark mass of smoke, the tall masts of a vessel rising above the sand-hills. From hillock to hillock, from group to group, the tidings had passed along that the masts belonged to the *Aigle*, and that the Empress of the French was on board. No scepticism and no despondency could stand proof against the testimony of those taper masts which now with the naked eye you could watch moving slowly across the

sand horizon. The multitude so downcast an hour or two before by the anticipation of failure, was now elated by the consciousness of success. Amongst the crowd there were few who had not some personal interest in the triumph of the enterprise whose final accomplishment had arrived, after so many years of delay and difficulty, and hope deferred. Men shook hands with each other without cause or previous knowledge; cheers were raised from time to time, and taken up heartily; people laughed, cried, and shouted by turns; and in many faces and many voices you could catch the symptoms of an excitement not far removed from an hysterical passion. Surely, since the days when the Ten Thousand caught sight of the sea at last, and shouted "Thalatta, Thalatta!" there can have been few emotions more vivid than those of the multitude on the shores of Lake Timsah as the masts of the *Aigle* rose clearer and clearer out of the pall of smoke.

On she came, winding slowly and surely through the turns of the Canal; and when at last her hull came fully into view as she glided into the broad waters of the lake, there was one loud, deafening cheer, which was drowned almost before it was begun by the roar of cannon. From the batteries on the banks, the bang

of the heavy guns came booming across the water; the sharp, quick rattle of platoon-firing followed, and the troops shouted with the hoarse, brief, Egyptian cry as the first sea-going vessel which had ever crossed the Isthmus steamed into the inland lake, having on board the Empress of the French, the wife of the Sovereign who, through ill and good report, has been staunch in his support of the enterprise which now stood tested, proved, and accomplished. The last rays of the setting sun shone brightly on the low sand-hills which surround the lake, upon the masts, upon the groups of spectators clustered like ants on the bare black slopes, upon the still blue waters, upon the flags which the *Aigle* flaunted forth, upon the wide expanse of the desert stretching away into the far distance; and as the *Aigle* came on, the two French steamers that had come up from Suez passed out of the cutting, under which they lay moored, into the lake. Then scarcely had the *Aigle* got clear of the straits ere she was followed by the *Gräf*, bearing at its mainmast the yellow standard of the House of Hapsburg. There was a pause before any other ship hove into sight; and meanwhile the night had come on, and the crowd, seeing that the Empress was not about to land, dispersed hastily. Of the thousand lights that twinkled forth as the dusk set in,

of the vast labyrinth of lights crowded with dusky figures in every variety of garb, of the fireworks, of the fair—the strange, wild gathering of many nations—and of the evening which followed the entry, I have no time to write. It is late; and yet from my hut I can hear the sounds of music and dancing in the Arab encampment; the rockets are still soaring at intervals into the sky, lighting up the darkness with a passing gleam and flash. But to-night I can record nothing beyond the one great fact, that the Canal is a success and a reality.

FROM ISMAILIA TO SUEZ.

SUEZ, *November* 21.

FROM the hour when the *Aigle* was met by the Messageries Impériales Steamers from Suez in the waters of Lake Timsah, the problem of the Isthmus Canal was solved. It is true that till to-day no vessel of larger burthen than a mere steam launch had ever sailed from sea to sea; but still, when once Lake Timsah had been entered at one and the same time by large ships hailing from Port Saïd and from Suez, the enterprise to which M. de Lesseps has devoted his life was achieved. This conclusion was so manifest, that after the evening of the 17th the Canal was considered to be opened; and official as well as private congratulations were tendered to the author of the scheme as if the traversing of the Canal were already an accomplished fact. On the night of the ball the Empress presented the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour to M. de Lesseps in the name of the Emperor. At one time there was serious talk of the Empress's not prosecuting her journey to Suez, but

making sail at once for France, *viâ* Port Saïd. It was urged, however, with great justice, that the curtailment of the original programme would be seized upon by the opponents of the Canal as an excuse for denying the completeness of its success; and, after communications had been exchanged between Compiègne and the *Aigle*, it was resolved to proceed with the progress. But it was found necessary to protract the journey to Suez from one day to two. Between the Bitter Lakes and the Red Sea the tide runs very fast and strong. Now experience has shown that, for vessels to steer safely through the Canal, they must have a good deal of way upon them. In order, however, to secure this advantage, when a ship is steaming down stream with the tide, it is necessary to go at a greater rate of speed than is consistent with due regard to the effect of the wash upon the banks; consequently it was deemed advisable that the inaugural expedition should sail against, not with, the tide; and as, both on Friday and Saturday, the tide was on the flow from the Red Sea at an early hour, it was decided that the fleet should proceed only as far as the Bitter Lakes on the first night after leaving Ismailia.

In a dramatic point of view, this alteration of the programme was injurious to the effectiveness of the in-

augural spectacle. The excitement had culminated on the Wednesday; and comparatively little interest was felt about the question as to what success might attend the progress of the fleet over a section of the Canal which had been already traversed. So slight, indeed, was the interest, that the English yacht the *Cambria* determined to precede the Royal squadron, and, sailing at an early hour from Ismailia, reached Suez before sunset on the same day. As, however, I had seen the more important section of the opening in a small steamboat, and had thus been able to witness the crowning act of the whole spectacle, I resolved to remain with the fleet, and to resume my old quarters on board the *Fayoum*.

There was no hurry about starting, and it was twelve o'clock on Friday morning before the *Aigle* slipped away from her anchorage, and, with the Imperial standard of France flying from the mainmast, made steam for the south-east corner of Lake Timsah, where the Canal winds out of the mere at a sharp angle. The Emperor of Austria's yacht, the *Gräf*, followed; and, according to the programme, the *Fayoum* was to have come next in order. But no programme is ever very rigidly adhered to in Egypt; and our Arab captain, firmly believing, like most of his countrymen, that discretion is the better

part of valour, gave way to every ship which endeavoured to squeeze past him, till we fell more and more to the rear in the long straggling file of vessels which were following in the wake of the *Aigle*. The exit from Lake Timsah is, and I think always will be, an awkward place in the voyage across the Isthmus. The land at this point stretches out into a shallow lagoon; the course is very indistinctly marked, a large number of the signal poles having been knocked down by the wash of the steamers; and the dredging at the mouth of the lake having been attended with exceptional difficulty, is not yet fully completed. In consequence, there was a long and ugly block in passing from the lake into the Canal. It should, however, be remembered that the conditions under which the experiment of the opening was tried were infinitely harder than those which are likely to attend the passage of ordinary merchant ships through the Canal. Under normal circumstances, it is most improbable you should have a couple of score of vessels all following each other as fast as possible, and all trying to outstrip each other. Moreover, even if this could be the case, each captain would be guided solely by regard to rules of seamanship, and would not, as in the present instance, have to take into account all kinds of col-

lateral considerations as to Royal precedence and naval etiquette. Just as we were entering the Canal we were ordered to give place by an Austrian frigate, on the plea that she had an Italian ambassador on board—an odd plea, by the way, to any one who, like myself, knew the Peninsula well in the old days of Austrian rule. The demand was not unreasonable in itself; but the result was that we almost grounded in the endeavour to give a wide berth to the frigate which hailed us. So it was with many other vessels of the fleet; and, as a consequence, for some hours a score or so of large ships lay huddled about the mouth of the Canal, and, having no way upon them, drifted helplessly upon the sand shoals with which the channel is surrounded. The first eight ships or so, all men-of-war, got out of the lake easily enough, and steamed away freely. The *Fayoum*, however, got stranded near the bar, and seemed determined to stick there indefinitely. As our captain was very far from eager about passing the Canal at all, and had told me before leaving Port Saïd that he never expected to get to Suez for ten years to come, I thought it best to entrust my fortunes to another vessel. By the kindness of the Telegraph Construction Company, I had already been invited to take up my quarters upon the

Hawk; but that bird of prey was already away down the Canal, and an attempt to catch her up in a rowing boat proved unavailing. Happily for me, I got my boat taken in tow by the *Newport*, a British Government steamer whose special duty it was to take soundings throughout the Canal for the use of the Admiralty. It was very pleasant to be transferred from the bustle, fuss, and noise of an Egyptian vessel, manned by an Arab crew, to the quiet and order of an English man-of-war. I was assured by the officers that the only obstructions they had encountered in their journey arose from the clumsiness with which the craft about them were steered; and certainly, as we glided on, at the rate of six knots an hour, between the high sandbanks, it seemed difficult to imagine there was any especial difficulty or danger about that pleasant, easy transit. We passed the sunken rock at Serapeum without slackening speed, as the soundings showed ample water for the *Newport*, which draws only fifteen feet. I am assured, however, that some months must elapse before the channel can be sufficiently cleared of rock to admit of the passage of ships drawing much more than seventeen feet. The average depth of the Canal is twenty-three feet; but in this short section of rocky bed, whose

length does not exceed a hundred mètres, the depth of water is not over eighteen, and, in order to deepen it, the rock will have to be blasted away—a work which must necessarily consume much time and labour. In consequence of the long delay at the mouth of the Canal, it was five o'clock before we passed out of the trench which leads from Ismailia to Serapeum into the open water of the Bitter Lakes. The sun was setting behind the rocky range of Gebel-Atka, which overhangs the desert hard by Suez; and the mountains, east and west, the dark blue waters of the Lake, the golden expanse of sand, the fleecy clouds which hovered round the horizon, were all lit up with a gorgeous variety of hue and tints and shades, not to be matched even in those Levantine regions which, for me, have seemed till now to offer the very perfection of colour-beauty. In the distance we could see the masts of the *Aigle* and her consort standing out dim, and yet distinct, against the sky, whose shade of cobalt blue was fading fast as the sunlight died away into a pale violet tint.

Very soon after our leaving the narrow channel of the Canal, the floating buoys vanished from sight, and we were left to steer our course as we liked by aid of chart and compass; so we steamed on over the vast

expanse of the inland sea till, after dark, we came up with the Imperial squadron, and cast anchor off the spit of land which divides the Bitter Lakes into two unequal portions, the northern section being some five times the area of the southern. Before nightfall seventeen ships of the expedition had come up to the point of anchorage, and all through the night the little fleet lay moored in the midst of the Bitter Lakes. As it turned out, just after the *Fayoum* had got off the sand-bank, the *Péluse* and the *Rapid* got aground across the bar at the entrance to the Canal, and stopped the passage of the remainder of the fleet. Thus our contingent was a small one, compared with the numbers which started from Port Saïd. Still, a score of large ships—the *Hawk* being the only one which was not a Government vessel—make a goodly show upon the waters of a land-locked lake. Rockets were fired and blue-lights displayed from the ships at anchor. There was a party on board the *Aigle*, to which all the chief officers of the various vessels were invited; and it was late before the lamps were put out, and the only light reflected on those tranquil waters was that of the moon at the full. There were men on board the *Hawk*, worthy of all credit, who declared to me that they had ridden, not a year ago,

over the desert sands lying fathoms deep beneath the waters on which our fleet rode at anchor. Their statement was corroborated by every description of written and oral testimony; and yet I found it hard to reconcile the assertion to the evidence of my senses. Any hypothesis, however improbable, seemed preferable to the supposition that these one hundred and twenty odd square miles of sea could have been created in the midst of the desert. When I went to sleep, lulled by the rocking of the *Hawk*, as she rolled gently from side to side with the ebb and flow of the waters, I could not help fancying that when I woke in the morning I should find the lake had vanished like a mirage of the desert. But when morning broke I found that we were already under way, and steaming behind the *Aigle*, now steering due south across the Bitter Lakes for the Canal which leads to Suez.

There being plenty of sea-room, and the number of our fleet being much diminished, there was nothing visible yesterday of the confusion which had characterised the breaking-up of the fleet on Friday morning. One by one the ships fell into their appointed place, and entered the Canal at the foot of the Bitter Lakes without any detention. The *Aigle*, being a very fast

vessel, soon got ahead of all her convoy; and the voyage through the last section of the Canal was absolutely devoid of incident. It was pleasant to sit upon the deck in the fresh morning air, pleasant to catch glimpses of the desert, pleasant to watch the masts of the *Aigle* fade out of sight into the smoke which clustered round them; while, at the same time, the hills above Suez grew even clearer and sharper in outline. But the sense of placid repose which remains associated with my memory of that bright forenoon sail is not linked with much observation worth recording. The dredges, with which the channel had been well-nigh blocked up only a week before, had vanished as if by magic; the workmen were gone, the sheds deserted; and a few Bedouin tents pitched near the banks were almost the only traces of human life the eye could detect far or near.

Long before we reached Suez, we could tell by the white puffs of smoke which rose up into the sky from the south, that the *Aigle* had entered the roadstead. It was one o'clock before we turned the corner of the long piers which enclose the end of the Canal, and found ourselves once more on the open sea. Steaming slowly across the neck of the Red Sea, we passed the new quay, decked out with triumphal arches, flags, and wreaths, cast anchor in the

outer dock under shelter of the breakwater, and our cruise was at an end.

The quays and wharves were crowded with knots of holiday folk, and there was no lack of cheering and counter-cheering, as ship after ship sailed up to its anchorage. But the first flush of exultation had been exhausted by the reception of the *Aigle*, and even at its best the excitement was far inferior to that of the first day at Ismailia. The occasion in itself was not calculated to stir up so much feeling, and the shore population of Suez was a mere drop in the bucket compared with the multitude gathered together on the shores of Lake Timsah. The afternoon was occupied in farewell visits between the various Royal personages, the Emperor of Austria and the Crown Prince of Prussia starting by special train for Cairo; and there was the usual amount of saluting and cannonading. In the evening, the Empress, escorted by M. de Lesseps, visited the town of Suez on foot, and dropped into several of the curiosity shops with which this quaint terminus town abounds. At night the ships were illuminated, and a display of fireworks, of more than usual brilliancy, brought the Suez fêtes to an end. The ropes and masts hung with lamps combined, with the long lines of light with which the buildings on the quay were

pricked out, to create the illusion that a fairy city of fire had been set afloat by some magician's wand upon the waters of the Red Sea.

There were dinners given on board of all the ships in the harbour in honour of the occasion. Not the least noteworthy was one given by Mr. Pender, on the deck of the *Hawk*, to a large party of English gentlemen. Besides our host, we had Lord Houghton, whose presence at any great public gathering seems to be a matter of course; Mr. Elliot, M.P., the great promoter of submarine telegraphy; Mr. Gregory, M.P.; Mr. Hawkshaw, the one English engineer who had the foresight and courage to foretell the future success of the Suez Canal; the Mayor of Manchester; and a score of other gentlemen, each of whom was a man of more or less mark in his own line of life. Mr. Pender, Mr. Elliot, and Mr. Hawkshaw—men whose opinion on such a question is worth recording—stated their conviction, in after-dinner speeches, that not only was the Canal an assured success in an engineering point of view, but that it was available for present use, and that from this day forward the tide of traffic between India and Europe must flow through the Suez Canal.

After my previous letters—written, I may add, while

the failure of the Canal was deemed certain by almost every resident in Egypt, and by most of the English visitors to the opening ceremony—I need hardly say that I coincide entirely in this opinion. I have not the time now to enter on any discussion as to the reasons besides those I have already mentioned in former letters which induce me to hold this view more firmly than ever. Yesterday I asked an English merchant captain of great experience, what part of the Canal he had found most difficult to navigate? His answer was, "There is no difficulty anywhere. It is as easy sailing through the Canal as going through the Pool." Immediately on the arrival of the *Hawk* at Suez, it was determined, on the captain's report, to send her back to England to embark the shore-end of the cable for India, and then to sail for Aden, *vid* the Suez Canal. Yesterday a large English shipowner telegraphed orders to London, to freight two of his ships, of about 2,000 tons each, for Bombay by the Isthmus route. I mention these facts, because they come within my own knowledge, as practical testimony to the success of the Canal.

AFTER THE OPENING.

AFTER the passage had been effected, and the *Fayoum* was riding at anchor in the waters of the Red Sea, I met the Captain again, and was saluted by him with the remark: "I told you we should get through all right." And the odd part of the incident is that, to my belief, both statements were made in perfect good faith. The spectacle of the brilliant success which had attended the opening had had such an influence upon his imagination that he had completely forgotten his previous scepticism. In this he only followed the example of the vast majority of the residents in Egypt, native as well as foreign. Within the last three weeks which preceded the inauguration of the Canal, I cannot recollect speaking to a single tourist, merchant, or official, not directly connected with the enterprise, who did not ridicule the notion that the Canal could either be opened by the date announced, or, if opened, could be used for practical purposes. Now, on the other

hand, the very same men refuse to listen to any criticism as to the absolute perfection of the Canal. The explanation of this sudden revulsion of feeling is that the opposition to the isthmus route in Egypt was based far more on prejudice than on conviction. In the first place, the Canal, if successful, must interfere with many of the most powerful interests in Egypt. It will diminish the importance of Alexandria as a harbour in favour of Port Saïd. It will deprive the railroad across the isthmus of its very lucrative transit traffic. It will tend to place Cairo still further out of the route of ordinary travel. It will decrease the value of properties which lie upon what has been hitherto the sole line of communication from sea to sea. It will interfere, in fact, with existing interests. Moreover, the Canal always has been, is to the present day, and probably will remain for some time, a purely French undertaking, and the French are disliked in Egypt by the natives because they are Europeans, and by other Europeans because they are French. The Anglo-Egyptian looks upon the Franco-Egyptian with feelings which you would have to go many a long year back to match in the old country. Owing to a strange error in our diplomacy,—an error for which Lord Palmerston must be held to be mainly responsible,—England set her face against the Suez Canal from its

inception. That the Canal ought not to be made, could never be made, and would not pay if it were made, were three articles of faith with British diplomatists in the East; and there was, probably, not an Englishman in Egypt, from the highest consular dignity to the humblest shop-boy in a British store, who did not deem it a point of honour to speak disparagingly of the Canal and its supporters. This feeling had, undoubtedly, diminished as time advanced, but still enough of it remained to the last to render the public opinion of the British community in Egypt lukewarm, to say the least, in its estimate of the Canal's chance of success. To all these causes we must add the natural tendency of human nature to look coldly upon the achievements of persons with whom we are familiarly acquainted. Everybody who was anybody in Egypt knew Lesseps intimately, and had known him for years as an active, bustling, good-humoured Frenchman, somewhat given to boasting of his own achievements sanguine in his expectations, loose, perhaps, in his statements. It went against the grain to admit that this voluble adventurer could really have been the artificer of a mighty enterprise,—the discoverer of a problem whose solution has puzzled the wisdom of ages.

It may be well here to pay the tribute which is justly

due to the author of the Canal. I have no doubt as time goes on men will begin to say that Lesseps had but a share in the actual construction of the canal; and that the credit of the achievement ought rightly to be divided with others. After one fashion this statement may be true. Columbus would never have got to America if he had not been ably seconded. But just as the discovery of the New World is due after all to the Genoese mariner, so the creation of the ship canal is due to Lesseps and to Lesseps only. Had it not been for his untiring energy, for his immovable faith in his own success, for his imperturbable good humour, his scheme must have foundered time after time. To any one who knows the obstacles with which the Canal had to contend, who sees what has been accomplished, who understands how completely the work was one man's work alone, there is something at once gratifying and disheartening in the thought how much could be achieved in this world of ours by one brave heart, one clear head, and one stout will,—and yet how little is actually achieved. Let me say this also, that in a country where it is assumed, as a matter of course, that every public man has some end to promote, some private advantage to secure in every act of his life, I have never heard one solitary insinuation that Lesseps had filled his

own pockets, or made money in any way out of the undertaking with which his name is associated. If the Canal succeed, he will no doubt be largely remunerated; but in any other event he will derive no benefit from his labours, except the by no means exorbitant salary he has received as manager of the company.

It is too early at the time at which I write to express any positive opinion as to the commercial success of the Canal. An English shipowner of high reputation, who has gone very closely into the calculation, assures me that the passage of three ships per diem, carrying two thousand tons each, would produce a sufficient income to pay 5 per cent. upon the capital subscribed. It seems to be agreed on all hands that the actual amount of money expended on the construction of the canal does not, as yet, exceed sixteen millions sterling. The improvements contemplated by the company, of whose nature I shall speak presently, do not exceed two millions and a half in estimated cost. If therefore a million and a half be added for the settlement of the undefined pecuniary liabilities, which must always accrue at the completion of so vast an enterprise, the capital on which interest will have to be paid would amount to twenty millions sterling. Receipts, therefore, at the rate of two thousand seven hundred a day would

nearly provide for a dividend of five per cent. I am not, however, disposed to attach much importance to this calculation, for the following reasons. Firstly, if three ships should go through regularly each day, we may be absolutely certain that a much larger number of vessels would use the Canal. Secondly, it still remains to be seen what will be the cost of keeping the channel open. M. Lavallé, the chief contractor of the works, has offered to undertake dredging the Canal for forty thousand pounds a year; but this estimate can hardly be considered to be based on any very reliable data. After all, it is still mere guess-work how the action of the water that is set in motion by the constant passing to and fro of large vessels will affect the banks of the Canal. Till this is known, no notion can be formed as to the expense of working the canal; and till that notion is formed, nobody can, with any accuracy, say what chance the shareholders have of realizing a dividend on their investments.

I think, however, that this question of dividend or no dividend is one which may very fairly be left out of count. Very few of the Canal shares are held in England; and the virtuous indignation which was so loudly expressed in our papers not long ago, at the wickedness of M. de Lesseps in inducing his countrymen and countrywomen to embark

their savings in an undertaking which could never pay, came with a bad grace from a country which was the originator of the Thames Tunnel, the Great Eastern, the London Chatham and Dover, and a thousand other schemes for promoting public works at the cost of private persons. The one question which concerns the outer world is, whether the canal can pay its working expenses. The London, Chatham, and Dover Railroad does earn money in excess of its outlay by running trains over its line, and therefore, whoever owns the line, trains will run between Dover and London *viâ* Chatham. The Thames Tunnel cost as much to keep it open as it earned in the way of receipts, if not actually more; and therefore, after a fitful existence, it is converted into a railway tunnel. Both enterprises were equally ruinous to their original shareholders. Even admitting that the canal should be added to the category of gigantic pecuniary failures,—an admission I am not as yet prepared to make,—it still has to be seen whether its failure will be like that of the Thames Tunnel or of the Chatham and Dover. I am myself of opinion that, supposing the Canal can be kept open, there is no possibility of doubt as to its paying its way. It is easy to prove anything by figures, and the Alexandrine merchants will give you statistics which show that it will always be

cheaper, quicker, and more convenient to send goods by sea to Alexandria, unload them at the port, carry them in carts to the railway station, transmit them by rail to Suez, and then re-embark them in another vessel for India, than to send them in the same bottom from England to Bombay. It is impossible for a man not personally conversant with the shipping trade to declare positively that these statistics are wrong; but we may fairly say the statement is too improbable a one to be accepted without the evidence of actual facts. Moreover, in all the many calculations of this nature I have had laid before me, the calculator invariably took no account of the circumstance that the transit dues charged by the Canal will infallibly be lowered if they should be found so high as to discourage the employment of the sea-to-sea route. On the other hand, it is, I think, evident enough, without the aid of figures, that the dues of the Canal, the cost of pilotage at the entrance and exit, and the increased rate of premium of insurance charged for the navigation of the Red Sea, will increase the cost of freight by the Isthmus, so as to make it equal to if not higher than that demanded by the long sea-route by the Cape of Good Hope. But the shipowner will make his profit by the fact that, *viâ* Suez, he can make four voyages a year, where formerly he could make but one; and to this

gain in turning over his capital there will be added the advantage that steamers will be able to take far more cargo by this route than by the old one, as they will coal at different stations along their journey, instead of having to take their whole supply of coals out with them on starting from England. For long voyages steamers are rapidly superseding sailing ships as the carriers of freight; and with the increasing competition in all mercantile transactions speed is becoming daily an element of greater importance. Even supposing, therefore, that the navigation of the Red Sea should prove an insuperable obstacle to the use of the Canal by sailing vessels, a very large portion of the Indo-European trade would still pass through it by means of steamboats. As to the possibility of navigating the Red Sea without steam I can express no opinion. All I can say is, that a very distinguished English officer, who has been long acquainted with the Red Sea waters, assured me the other day that there was no more difficulty in sailing through it with proper care, than through any other inland sea he had ever navigated.

All the minor difficulties about transit dues, pilotage, draught of vessels, anchorage in port, and so forth, which I hear constantly urged as reasons why the Canal cannot be employed as a permanent route of ship transit, seem to me

rather beside the mark. Supposing,—and I admit this supposition is the real point to be determined,—that M. de Lesseps has constructed a canal from sea to sea, through which vessels carrying large cargoes can pass, then I feel no doubt that such vessels will pass. Trade, like water, always finds its own level; and just as the waters of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean flowed into the Bitter Lakes as soon as the dams were removed, so the course of trade will, by virtue of a natural law, pass along the shortest route in preference to the longest. If the vessels at present engaged in the Indian and China trades cannot be conveyed effectively through the canal, vessels of less draught will be constructed which can serve the purpose; and, which is more important for us Englishmen to bear in mind, if the traders who have the trade by the Cape route in their hands do not accommodate themselves to the exigencies of the new route, the trade will pass into other hands.

Has a new sea highway been constructed?—This is the real point at issue. The point is one on which I do not profess to speak with absolute certainty,—concerning which also I must mistrust all who do speak with such certainty. All I wish to do is to describe the Canal as I have seen it. Let us start then with Port Saïd, the new harbour, which has been called into being on the shores of

the Mediterranean. Engineers of high authority proved beforehand that this harbour could never be made. It has been made, and, therefore, I attach less importance to kindred assertions that it can never be kept open. Once upon a time the Port of Pelusium stood much where Port Saïd stands now; but I take it that in its palmiest days Pelusium was only used by ships of small burthen; and the harbour, such as it was, had been filled up long ago. So for all practical purposes M. de Lesseps has had to build a completely new port. This work has been effected by digging out great basins on the shore, and by running two immense piers into the sea, between which a channel has been scooped out into deep water. As things are now, vessels of three thousand tons, drawing twenty feet of water, have entered Port Saïd without the slightest difficulty. The approach from the sea is far better than that into the port of Alexandria: and it must be a tempest of a violence very unusual in the Mediterranean which could hinder vessels from making the port by daylight. In fact, as the distance across the mouth of the harbour is half a mile, sailing vessels will have room to tack in entering it. When all the lighthouses, buoys, signals, &c. are in full working order, Port Saïd will stand for the present in the first class of Mediterranean harbours. Will it remain so?

That is to some degree a matter of speculation. The Nile, as everybody knows, discharges every year a vast amount of alluvial deposit into the Mediterranean; the shore of Egypt encroaches in consequence upon the sea. And as the western pier of Port Saïd harbour lies right across the current of waters which flow from the Damietta bank of the Nile, a sort of scum of sand and soil and sediment collects rapidly about this pier. Already a sandbank has been formed along some hundred feet or so of the shore end of this breakwater, which when it was constructed was entirely surrounded by water, and every year this sandbank increases in length. In the course, therefore, of years this sandbank must reach the mouth of the harbour. The constructors, however, of the port allege that this contingency cannot take place for a very long time, and that when it does occur, the evil can be obviated by prolonging the piers into deep water. A more immediate difficulty arises from the mode in which the pier is constructed. It is not a solid block of masonry, but a sort of network of blocks placed one above the other. Through the interstices between these blocks the current streams in, bearing the delta deposit with it, and this deposit settles down in the bed of the channel between the piers. It is urged on behalf of the Canal,

that this deposit can easily be cleared away by dredging. But I am told by very eminent engineers not unfriendly to the Canal, that it will assuredly be necessary to close up the interstices in the pier at a cost of about half a million sterling.

Be this as it may, Port Saïd, for the time being, is a first-class harbour, with room, as I saw on the day of the opening, to accommodate a hundred vessels of large burthen in the harbour alone. If more accommodation should be wanted, it can be supplied easily by increasing the number and size of the docks. From Port Saïd the Canal stretches, in one large unbroken reach, through Lake Menzaleh, a distance of over twenty miles. I have often seen in newspaper comments upon the Canal the assumption made that the construction of the Canal was facilitated by its passing through a series of natural inland lakes. This assumption is totally erroneous. The only lakes across whose waters ships sail, in passing from sea to sea, are artificial lakes, created in the course of the Canal's construction. The natural lakes, such as Lake Menzaleh, Lake Ballah, and the Lagoons, near Suez, were obstacles, not aids, to the making of the trench. Lake Menzaleh, for instance, is an immense shallow mere, over whose waters nothing larger than a fishing smack could

possibly sail. Oddly enough, it was in the Port Saïd-Kantara reach that the *Latif* ran aground, on the night preceding the opening, and thereby all but closed the Canal against the passage of the inaugural fleet. At a moment of such intense excitement as that which preceded the opening of the channel across the Isthmus, it is intelligible enough that any wild rumour should have been credited. But the notion that a British officer like the commander of the *Latif* purposely ran his ship aground to thwart the triumph of M. de Lesseps, is too ludicrous to be seriously entertained; and I believe the true explanation of the *Latif's* mishap points to one of the most serious inconveniences which attend the passage of the Canal. In its voyage as a pioneer vessel down the stream, the *Latif* had suddenly to swerve out of her straight course to avoid coming into collision with a heavily-laden barge coming up stream, which was either unwilling or unable to draw up on one side. The sudden swerve sent the *Latif* upon the bank, and her bows became embedded in the soft earth. Lying across the channel, as she did, she could only free her bows by backing her stern into the opposite bank; and it was solely by the assistance of some hundreds of men, who were sent down to the spot and warped her off with ropes, that the ship was got off the bank, after

many hours' detention. Like casualties have occurred to most vessels that have been as yet up and down the Canal. As long as a ship keeps exactly in mid-stream all is well; but the slope of the trough is so steep, and the bed of the channel is as yet so narrow, that a very slight deviation from the course will suffice to send a ship aground; and the twist given to her by the mere fact of running aground is almost sure to place her athwart the channel. No doubt the trough of the Canal can be, and will be, widened hereafter by dredging; but I do not see as yet how this dredging process can be carried on to any large extent while ships are passing up and down the Canal.

From Kantara, where Lake Menzaleh ends, the Canal is carried across the desert. If you walk, as I have done, through the desert close by the side of this section, it seems absolutely impossible that a lasting trench could be cut through it. In walking, you sink over your ankles with every step you take on the sand; and the particles are so fine, that there appears to be no kind of cohesion between them. The one answer to your doubts as to the possibility of the trench being made is, that the trench is made, and holds water. The trench is there, it has been filled with water for many months, steam-dredges

have been constantly passing up and down it, and it is as perfect to all outward appearance as when it was first filled with the current. The extent of the wash, about which so much has been said, depends entirely upon the speed with which the passage of the Canal is made, not upon the size of the paddle-wheels or screws by which the vessel passing is propelled. At four knots an hour, the largest steamer which passed from sea to sea produced almost no perceptible wash; while a little steam-launch, in which I once made the journey along the Canal, and which went at double that speed, created a very considerable wave. Still, the crumbling away at the edge of the water is very trifling as yet in magnitude; and this detrition can be easily remedied, as it has already been in some portions, by laying layers of stone along the water's edge. I think it very possible that the bed of the Canal is stirred up as ships pass over it into a sort of quagmire of sand and water; but as soon as the motion ceases the sand sinks again, and the formation of any shoal can be prevented by the use of dredges. Near the entrance into Lake Timsah the Canal twists and turns in a very tortuous fashion. There is no reason for this twisting; and the curves are found to be so inconvenient that the course will have to be straightened—a work presenting

no engineering difficulties, but requiring a considerable outlay.

Ismailia, the town on the shore of Lake Timsah, is, like the lake itself, the creation of M. de Lesseps. A very few years ago there was not a dwelling, or a blade of grass, or drop of water, to be found here. Now it is a flourishing town, with a population of some ten thousand souls, and with luxuriant vegetation round about its houses. All this change is due to the Sweet Water Canal which the company has constructed between the lake and the Nile; and the existence of Ismailia is a proof, if proof were wanted, of how the whole of the Egyptian desert might be peopled and fertilized, if only it could be brought into communication with the waters of the Nile.

Lake Timsah, which lies exactly half-way between sea and sea, will be for a long time to come the place where vessels going up and down stream will pass each other. I do not say ships cannot pass in the Canal itself; but the experiment must always be attended with risk for the present; and, as a rule, the crossing will take place either here or in the Bitter Lakes. As I have said, the Canal may be widened hereafter; the constructors are of opinion, —an opinion, I may mention, shared by Mr. Hawkshaw, —that the Canal at its present width is quite available for

ordinary ship traffic, and that it would be folly to undertake any further widening till experience has shown what amount of traffic may be relied upon hereafter. Thus, for the present, Ismailia will be the half-way halting-house for ships between Suez and Port Saïd.

The section from Lake Timsah to the Bitter Lakes is a straight piece of cutting through the desert, which presented little difficulty, and was constructed with great rapidity. Everything went on swimmingly till ten days before the opening. Then the dredging-buckets suddenly struck something hard. Explorations were made, and it was found that in the very centre of the Canal there cropped up a layer of rock about eighty mètres in length. By immense exertions enough of the rock was blasted away to give a depth of seventeen to eighteen feet over the rock. The maximum depth of vessels allowed to take part in the procession had to be reduced from twenty feet to sixteen, and three months at least will be required before the layer can be removed by blasting. Till this is done the Canal can only be used by ships drawing not more than sixteen and a half feet. It is an immense object for the company to liberate itself from the obligation of paying five per cent. interest on its shares,—an obligation which is binding upon them by the deed of

association,—till such time as the Canal is open for the passage of vessels drawing at least twenty feet. In consequence, no vessels drawing this depth are, I believe, refused admission; but their cargo is removed, and shipped in barges through the Canal, at the expense of the company, and thus they are so far relieved in weight as to be enabled to pass through the Canal.

After passing Serapeum, where the sunken rock was found, the Canal opens out into the Bitter Lakes. The theory that the waters of these lakes would be exhausted by evaporation or percolation through the sand more rapidly than they could be filled, has been disproved by the evidence of facts; and whatever doubt there may be as to the permanence of the Canal, there can be no question that so long as the Canal furnishes a water conduit between the two seas, this inland sea will continue to be a sheet of water navigable by great ships. The lakes have not yet been carefully surveyed or sounded, but the experience of the inaugural fleet has shown that there is ample room within these lakes for a large number of big vessels to navigate at ease.

From the Bitter Lakes to the Red Sea the Canal again passes in a trench through the sands of the desert. This section is very incompletely finished; but owing to its

proximity to the lakes on one side, and to the Red Sea on the other,—from both of which places dredges can be brought up without delay,—there will be no difficulty in increasing both its width and depth, without any stoppage of the through traffic. It is probable that the piers into the Red Sea will have to be lengthened; but on the other hand the docks of the company on the western side of the Red Sea, and the causeway over which the railroad is carried which connects them with the Suez and Egyptian railroad system, are in perfect working order.

Thus it will be seen that, if my estimate be correct, the Canal is now completed as an engineering experiment. Not only has the whole of the inaugural squadron, numbering some sixty craft of all sizes, passed to and fro from one end to the other, but since the opening several ships have already sailed through it in the way of business. Among others a Dutch frigate, the *Curaçoa*, from Java, drawing eighteen feet, has actually got through from the Red Sea, and pursued its journey to Holland through the Mediterranean. As a mechanical problem, therefore, the piercing of the isthmus is an accomplished fact. Whether the channel can be kept open at a cost not exceeding the receipts from ship dues is an issue that

the future must decide. I have no doubt that a considerable sum of money will have to be raised for the completion of the Canal; and the prospects of the company will depend in no small measure upon the amount required, and the terms on which this amount can be raised. Still the interests, not only of Egypt, but of Europe and India, are so deeply involved in keeping the Canal open, that I feel convinced money will be forthcoming, not only to complete the work, but to keep it in working order when completed.

THE FÊTES AT CAIRO.

CAIRO, *November 26.*

IT is a well-known maxim in the theatrical world that the spectators who express their dissatisfaction most loudly, who are most grudging of their applause, most impatient at the waits, most severe in their criticism at every hitch in the performance, are the people who come in with orders. An illustration of the truth on which this maxim is founded might have been observed at the conclusion of the journey through the Canal. Everybody was in a hurry to get back to Cairo as quickly as possible; and, as everybody considered that he had been grievously wronged if a whole compartment had not been reserved for his own private accommodation, the indignation of the Viceroy's guests at finding they had to scramble for their seats may, in the time-honoured phrase of provincial reporters, be better imagined than described. Anybody who has ever been to Epsom on a Derby-day by rail, or who has returned from the Crystal Palace on a fête night,

or has even come home from Richmond on a fine Sunday evening in summer, knows well enough the meaning of a scramble and a crush on a railway platform. When to the normal difficulty of finding places for a hundred people in a carriage which holds ten at a pinch you add a blazing hot sun, and the circumstance that guards and porters spoke a language utterly unintelligible to the passengers, and that all the officials, after the fashion of Eastern nations, succumbed at once, in hopeless, helpless apathy, to the pressure placed upon them, you have the elements of such a scene of confusion as was witnessed upon the platform of Suez on the day following the opening of the Canal. Still, as somehow or other we all got through, and reached Cairo in the course of the evening, I don't think that we had much to complain of, especially as we had not a sixpence to pay for our journey. However, we, as a body, considered ourselves to have been infamously swindled, and many of our fellow-passengers, French as well as English, vented their displeasure upon the unoffending Egyptian commissioners in language which, I sincerely hope, was unintelligible to those to whom it was addressed.

After a long, hot day's journey, we were landed at Cairo just in time to dress for the Viceroy's ball, which

was to be given at the Boulak Palace in honour of the Emperor of Austria. I don't know that there is much to be said about the ball, as, indeed, there is little to be said about most of the state galas of the Viceregal Court. The one ambition of the Khediveh—as long, at any rate, as he is entertaining his European guests—is to reproduce Europe in Egypt. His efforts are successful in their way; and it would be difficult in London or Paris to give a handsomer ball than the one at which I had the good fortune to be present. There were any number of wax lights, crowds of handsomely dressed men and women, a brilliant orchestra, a capital supper, and a very regiment of waiters in gorgeous liveries. All these things are good in their way; and it may seem ungrateful to grumble because they were not good in a different way. Still, you could hardly help asking yourself why you should have come to the Nile to be present at an entertainment you might have seen given to much better effect on the banks of the Thames or the Seine. The men were dressed by Poole, the women by Worth; the orchestra was composed of Germans; the dance music was taken from the "Belle Hélène" and the "Grande Duchesse." The waiters were Frenchmen, dressed in red English liveries; and the supper might have been furnished by Chevet or Gunter.

Except for the fezes worn by a number of the foreigners in the employment of the Egyptian Government, there was nothing to recall the fact that you were in the land of the Pharaohs. There was a small sprinkling of Arab Sheikhs; but their proportion to the European guests—one, perhaps, in a hundred — was so small that their presence gave no character to the entertainment. The Emperor of Austria made but a short sojourn at the ball, and walked through the rooms with the Khediveh while the band played the Imperial Austrian March. Dancing was kept up to a very late hour; and the one picturesque incident of the whole evening was the change from the ball-room, where you fancied yourself in Europe, to the courtyard of the Palace, where white-clad syces, Arab donkey-boys, with their blue blouses and bare legs, and khavasses, with their hippopotamus whips, stood waiting for the departure of the guests.

Somewhat of a like criticism as to the total absence of any Oriental colouring may be made on the races given on Monday in the Abassieh Plain. Still, with all the good-will in the world, you cannot Anglicize the Desert, or Frenchify the vegetation of the East; and, therefore, about these Cairo races there was something not to be confounded with one's recollections of Epsom or the Bois de

Boulogne. You drove along a road lined with prickly pears, palm groves, and pepper-trees; you passed under the shadow of mosques whose walls are painted gridiron fashion, with broad stripes of red and yellow; you wound your way through dusky crowds of turbaned figures, through strings of camels, till at last you left behind you a barrack-looking palace, where Abbas Pacha used to keep his harem, and found yourself in mid-desert. Of all portions of the Sand sea which I have yet visited, this bay, if I may apply the term, which runs in through the Delta's shores right up to the outskirts of Cairo, corresponds most closely to my notion of what the Desert ought to be: a vast expanse of rolling billows of yellow sand stretches as far as the eye can reach. Here there are none of the ridges, hollows, heights, banks, and valleys which break the uniformity of the Desert as I have seen it elsewhere. The undulations in the surface of the sand are here so slight that, from a little distance, the Desert hard by the Abassieh looked flat. Only as you drew nearer could you perceive that the racecourse lay on the side of a great shelving slope. The sand was yellow, with a deep tawny hue; your carriage-wheels sunk well-nigh up to the axle as the horses tugged wearily over the plain; the sun glared from a sky dazzling to the sight with its

depth of cloudless blue. And yet there, upon a background so unfamiliar to the English eye, was placed the outward semblance of an English racecourse. Grand stand, Jockey Club enclosure, tents for refreshments, weighing paddocks, and all the rest of the *mise en scène* of a thriving provincial meeting, were provided for in the Desert. The course was marked out with ropes; the jockeys wore top-boots and velvet caps. Rows of London-built carriages, breaks, drags, barouches were drawn up on either side of the course; and, to make the illusion perfect, there were parties of gaily-dressed women unescorted by gentlemen, about whose lot in life no doubt could be entertained. The only things wanting were the ring and the roar of the betting men. Egypt, unfortunately, has not progressed far enough in its acquirement of Western civilization to have produced a Welcher.

There were crowds of Arabs, chiefly donkey-boys, syces, khavasses, or camel-drivers, collected about the stands, and they seemed to me to take more genuine interest in the racing than I ever witnessed in any racecourse crowd out of England. So far as I could see, none of the Egyptian ladies were present; and the carriage-company was exclusively composed of Europeans. At two o'clock the Khediveh and the Emperor of Austria drove up along the

racecourse in an open barouche with four horses, and with postilions and outriders dressed in English liveries; and the sport began forthwith. Race followed race with commendable rapidity. As the Viceroy dislikes to be kept waiting, and has the power to make his displeasure felt by very potent arguments, there were no false starts; and between two and six a dozen races were run, over distances varying from two to six miles in length. I confess that when you don't know the name of a single horse, and have not a sixpence on the event, the noble sport always seems to me to be singularly dull; and I doubt whether even sporting readers would be grateful to me for a correct card of the Cairo November meeting. The only incidents in the day's legitimate sport I need record are, that wherever English and Arab horses ran together, the former invariably won, and that one of the gentlemen riders was a brother correspondent, who, unfortunately for the credit of literature, did not mount the winning horse. The dulness, however, of the legitimate racing was made up for to some degree by an eminently illegitimate race for speed between dromedaries. Three started: one tailed off at an early period; and the remaining two trotted three times round the course, six miles in all, neck by neck, till they reached the Royal stand, when one of them, ridden by a

negro, shot ahead and won in a canter. Knowing people said both the beasts belonged to the same owner, and never raced at all. They certainly took twenty-seven minutes in doing six miles; whereas I was informed by Sir Samuel Baker, who probably knows more about dromedaries than most men, that they ought to run in full racing pace five miles in fifteen minutes. So far as I could observe with the aid of a field-glass, a great part of the distance was done at a swinging walk, the gallop or fast trot being resorted to only when in sight of the stands. The mystery to me was how the riders kept their seats. Perched up on the top of the hump in a little seat, not unlike that in which a Hansom cabman sits, they had no apparent support for their feet. Their legs dangled loosely on either side the dromedary's neck; and every moment you fancied they must fall off, as they leaned from side to side cracking their hippopotamus-hide whips. However, there was no accident; and the whole day's racing was unattended with a single casualty.

On Tuesday and Wednesday the Emperor of Austria visited the lions of Cairo. On the evening of the latter day he drove, in company with the Viceroy, to the Pyramids of Ghiseh. Dinner had been sent out beforehand; the road which, when I visited it a fortnight ago, was

under water in many parts, had been completely repaired; the dust over the ten miles' drive was kept down by watering machines; and, as the sunset was brilliant beyond even the ordinary brilliancy of Egyptian sunsets, the Royal party had an excellent view of the marvels of Egypt. During the day the Pyramids were visited and ascended by any number of foreign visitors; and, after nightfall, when all the strangers had gone home, except a few who, like myself, had heard some rumour of the programme, the Pyramid of Cheops was illuminated for the benefit of the Emperor. The spectacle was very pretty, and the long lines of the Pyramid's corners, lit up with magnesium lights, looked, from a little distance, like a series of Jacob's ladders ascending up to heaven. Rockets were fired at intervals along the high-road till the Emperor of Austria had reached his palace: and it was not till late at night that the road ceased to be encumbered with trains of camels bearing on their backs the English servants of the Khediveh, who had been sent out to the Pyramids in full livery. "Jeames" riding astride upon a camel in all the glory of powder, scarlet coat, and silk knee breeches! Such is one of the many anomalies you meet with in the land of the Pharaohs. Yesterday morning the Emperor returned to Alexandria, where he is to be present at a ball

given by the Viceroy, and to-morrow he sails for Europe. People say at Cairo that he is home-sick and tired of travel. It may well be so. He looks worn and weary and sad enough. Heaven knows he has had enough to sadden him.

THE CANAL AT WORK.

ISMAILIA, *Dec.* 18.

BEFORE leaving Egypt I was resolved to see how the Suez Canal looked when in actual working trim. With this object I landed at Port Saïd once again, in the hope of finding some vessel proceeding to Suez on which I could prosecute my journey. I did not, however, reach the port till after mid-day; and by that time it was too late to get on as far as Ismailia by daylight. The *Danube*, a large English steamer, had left in the morning; and as no merchant vessel was under orders to sail through the Canal for a couple of days, I was compelled to take my passage by the passenger boat which plies every morning between the sea and Lake Timsah, and to spend the afternoon and night at Port Saïd. The day passed on slowly and drearily enough. At the best of times Port Saïd is not a lively place, and at this moment it is suffering from the reaction which is always consequent upon a great excitement. When I had last seen it the harbour was filled with hun-

dreds of vessels; the town flaunted with flags; there were triumphal arches and ornamental kiosks everywhere; the streets swarmed with a motley multitude of many nations; the hum of countless voices was interrupted by the constant roar of cannon. Now all was quiet, sleepy, dull. The outer harbour was almost empty; the inner harbour, though it contained some thirty ships of large burthen, looked deserted by comparison; the flags had been taken down, the booths shut up, the arches removed; and the only reminiscences of the pageant of the 17th consisted of the two dummy obelisks at the entrance of the Canal; the canvas of their wooden framework was already peeling off under the influences of the heavy storm which visited the African coast in the course of last week.

Still, when I tried to recall the aspect of Port Saïd as I had seen it ten days before the opening, it seemed to me that I was looking on more life and activity than I remembered to have seen then. New hotels, shops, and warehouses were springing up in the main thoroughfares, and the town was certainly fuller of inhabitants. I am not sure, however, how far this increase can be regarded as permanent. At the present moment there has been a large influx into Port Saïd of workmen discharged from the Canal at the termination of the contracts. As I men-

tioned in a previous letter, the engagements of all men employed on the works expired at noon on the day of the opening; and, contrary to general expectation, very few of them have been renewed. The more prudent of the men have gone home with their earnings; but the ruck of the labourers and mechanics have loitered on at Port Saïd in hope of a fresh job, spending their money at the cafés, saloons, dram-shops, and houses of ill-repute with which the town is crowded. Brawls and drunken riots are of constant occurrence; and if you wished to enlist recruits for the regiments of the "enfants perdus" in Algeria, I suspect that Port Saïd, at this present time, would be the best of recruiting grounds. Amusements of a decent kind are not to be found in this African Wapping; and, even were it otherwise, prudent people shrink from going about much after dark at Port Saïd.

So I spent the evening in a café attached to our hotel, listening perforce to the conversation of a number of the *habitués*, who were all connected with the Canal in the capacity of foremen, overseers, clerks, or skilled artisans, and who, one and all, had some not very intelligible grievance about the changes that had been introduced, or were about to be introduced, into the management of the company. From them I learnt, what I heard after-

wards confirmed on better authority, that Voisin Bey, who has hitherto been director-in-chief of the works, is to be replaced by M. Lavallé, the head of the firm of contractors by whom the later portion of the Canal has been constructed. This change is understood to entail a fundamental alteration in the whole system of management, though of what exact nature I am too little acquainted with the details of the undertaking to do more than surmise.

With the early dawn I was on board the Transit Company's steamer, and was again sailing between the high sandbanks, whose aspect is now so familiar to me. I had expected, from what I had seen beforehand, that I should find a great deal of work going on along the Canal, and that, at any rate, I should see the dredges again in full employment. I found nothing of the kind. Between Port Saïd and Lake Timsah there was only one solitary dredging machine at work; and of the half-dozen dredges or so still anchored in the stream, the major portion were disabled by some accident, and were left moored where they were only because they needed repairs before their removal. It was obvious to the most careless observer that the work was deemed, rightly or wrongly, to be concluded. On our way up, we encountered long strings of

barges, filled with barrows, planks, picks, scaffolding poles, and so forth, employed on the works, which were on their way down to Port Saïd, to be sold off there for refuse, or shipped away to Europe. Now, no technical knowledge is required to be aware that implements of this sort fetch little or nothing when they are sold, and yet cost a great deal to buy when they are required for use. The mere fact, therefore, that the company or the contractors were getting rid of all these odds and ends of their working plant would alone be proof, without more direct evidence, that there is no immediate intention of resuming the works upon the Canal.

In consequence of this almost absolute cessation of all labour, there is little or nothing to say about the look of the Canal, unless I were to repeat what I have already described. Excepting the barges filled with barrows, the Canal was almost deserted on the day I last traversed it. We met the *Adonis*, a French Government despatch-boat —a small three-masted steamer of, I should guess, about a thousand tons burthen—steaming down the channel at some seven or eight knots an hour. The *Adonis* had made the voyage from Cochin China by the Red Sea, and was pursuing her journey direct to Toulon across the Isthmus. There was about her transit something of a

business air, if I may use the phrase, which was wanting to the passage of the Inaugural Squadron. But, as a matter of fact, her passage was no test of the capabilities of the Canal, as compared with that of many other vessels which have gone through both at the time of and since the opening. Throughout the seven hours' steam from Port Saïd to Ismailia, though I paid special attention to the state of the banks on either side, I could observe no trace whatever of the crumbling in of the sand under the action of the wash, about which we heard so much beforehand. So far as my own observation went—an observation, I may add, which was confirmed by other passengers on our boat, who, like myself, had traversed the Canal on the 17th—the banks looked harder and firmer than they did then. That they should be so is only the exact confirmation of what M. de Lesseps has all along declared would be the case. According to his theory, the effect of water upon sand is to bind it together; and therefore, as large portions of the Canal banks above water-level have now been exposed for some three weeks to the wash of the wave caused by the passage of large steamers, they ought naturally to be more solid than they were. To the best of my observation, they are so in fact as well as in theory.

Lake Timsah looked strangely forlorn and desolate as I recalled the aspect it bore when I had last seen it. The only ship upon its lonely waters was a Spanish man-of-war conveying troops to the Philippine Islands, which had halted for a couple of days at Ismailia to take in water. The *Danube* had gone straight through, and the *Hertha*, a Prussian frigate, had also left on the previous day, and had been got over the rock at Serapeum after her draught of water had been lessened by the removal of her heavy guns. I found on inquiry that no transit service of any kind had yet been organized between Ismailia and Suez, and that, in order to reach the Red Sea by the Canal, I should have to wait till a vessel arrived from Port Saïd, as no ship was expected for two or three days; and, as I was assured by persons who had recently made the journey from Suez that there was the same complete cessation of work which I had noticed in the lower half of the Canal, I resolved to prosecute my journey by land.

Thus, as a matter of fact, the works are now at a stand-still. That they were so, I needed no telling after what I had seen; but, having had the pleasure of meeting M. de Lesseps again during my passage through Ismailia, I was assured by him that the works, in his opinion, are com-

pleted. Whether deliberate choice, or considerations of policy, or financial reasons have led to the determination on the part of the company to regard the Canal as finished, I do not pretend to say. All I know is, that this determination is not arrived at. Nor am I prepared to say that it has been justified by facts. But for the obstruction caused by the sunken rock at Serapeum, ships drawing twenty-two feet could now pass without difficulty from sea to sea. This obstruction has hitherto been partially surmounted, as in the case of the *Hertha*, by the process of lightening the vessels drawing above seventeen feet by the removal of portions of their cargo. But this process has to be conducted at the cost of the company, and is inconvenient and expensive. The removal of the rock is a matter of urgent necessity; and though, so far as I could learn, very little has been done towards deepening the channel at Serapeum since the opening, I believe this delay has been solely occasioned by the fact that additional blasting apparatus has had to be sent for from Europe, and has but just arrived, if indeed, a fact of which I am not quite certain, it actually has arrived. Still, when once the work has been begun in earnest, no very long time—a couple of months at most—will be required before the rocky bed has been lowered to

the level of the rest of the Canal—that is, to an average depth of twenty-two to twenty-five feet.

No doubt, even when this is done, there will, as I have stated in my previous letters, be much to do before the Canal can be regarded as absolutely completed. To cite a few of the chief improvements required, the pier breakwaters at Port Saïd will have to be converted from open stonework into solid masonry; portions of the sandbanks between Lakes Ballah and Timsah will require coating with stone; the twisted course of the channel at El Ghisr will need straightening; and the exit from Lake Timsah, southwards, must be deepened and widened. These various improvements are calculated to cost two millions sterling. All estimates of this kind are extremely unreliable: and all you can say with any certainty is that, before these alterations are effected, the exchequer of the company will have to be replenished. How this is to be done is a question I have no means of answering. Financial authorities at Alexandria and Cairo assert that the main object of all the recent festivities is to facilitate the negotiation of a large loan in the European money-markets, and that the public will very shortly be invited to invest their funds in the Suez Canal, in the form of debentures or preference stock, or in the shares of a new

company of liquidation. These same authorities, however, have been so uniformly and persistently hostile to the scheme from its commencement, that their statements must be received with distrust; and I own that, if the intention of the company were to resume their works as soon as funds could be raised for their prosecution, it seems to me incredible they should be shipping away their working plant. Under these circumstances, I am disposed to accept the assurance given me on the spot by the management of the Canal as being given in good faith. The Canal—so the official statement runs—is now practically completed. The works are not to be prosecuted—with the solitary exception of the blastings at Serapeum—because there is no present necessity for their prosecution: and, in consequence, no further loan is required for the time being. Whenever the obstruction at Serapeum is removed, the Canal will derive a large income from its transit dues, and out of the income thus raised all future outlay can be defrayed.

This official view is unquestionably rose-coloured; and my experience of financial embarrassments, public and private, has led me to be sceptical about all assertions that no further advances will be required. Still, it is on the cards that the Canal may soon be in receipt of a very

large income from its legitimate working; and, if so, the official statement will not fall far short of the truth. The whole question turns upon the amount of traffic which will pass through the Canal. Down to the end of last month, one hundred and thirty vessels, with a gross burthen of 80,000 tons, had passed from sea to sea. Of this number, however, close upon a hundred must have belonged, directly or indirectly, to the Inaugural Squadron—each vessel of which, by the way, having made the voyage both up and down, counts for two in the tally; and the remainder must fairly be considered as vessels sent on experimental trips, not as ships engaged in ordinary trade. The truth is, that there has not been time for the traffic returns to be tested with any accuracy. The chief European harbours are many days' sail from Port Saïd; and even supposing that the shippers of England, France, Holland, and Germany had chartered and freighted vessels for India—*viâ* the Isthmus—immediately upon receipt of the telegrams announcing the opening of the Canal, there would barely be time for the pioneers of the commercial fleet to have reached Port Saïd. There has been as yet no rush upon the Canal; but then it is scarcely possible that such a rush should have taken place. I heard great complaints from the Canal authorities of the temporary injury

inflicted on its prospects by the refusal of Lloyd's to insure ships on the Red Sea at any premium. I hardly imagine that the statement can be literally true. If it is, I should strongly advise English underwriters to reconsider a decision which can only eventuate in diverting the business of maritime insurance into the hands of more enterprising traders. No opposition, however influential, can hinder the Suez Canal route from being the sea highway between Europe and India. Only the other day I read an article, bristling with statistics, in an English financial organ, the object of which was to prove that, for a variety of ingenious reasons, the trade to India would still be carried round the Cape. I was reminded of an old pamphlet, written at the time when the Manchester and Liverpool Railway was in course of construction, wherein it was shown, by incontrovertible figures, that though, theoretically, there might be a slight saving of time in going from Manchester to Liverpool by railroad, yet, practically, the public would find it shorter to go by coach. The one answer to all objections as to the eligibility of the Suez Canal is contained in the simple fact that the distance from London or Liverpool to Bombay by this route, as compared with that by the Cape, is some five thousand miles less out of ten thou-

sand. Keep this fact well in mind, and you will have no doubt as to the truth of the assertion I have often made before, and now repeat for the last time, that the whole course of trade between East and West has been revolutionized by the piercing of the Isthmus.

THE KHEDIVEH.

CAIRO, *December* 16.

WHAT is the exact status of the Khediveh is a question which puzzles all diplomatic experts to solve. If, however, you have resided for any time within his dominions, you have no practical difficulty as to defining his position. As regards the Sultan, he may be a mere vassal; though I confess the Porte would, in my opinion, find extreme difficulty in acting upon the vassalage theory; but, as regards Egypt, he is *de facto*, if not *de jure*, the supreme lord and master. Some weeks ago it was currently reported that the Padishah intended to be present at the opening of the Canal; the idea of the Sultan's visit could have obtained credence only with persons ignorant of the true state of the relations between Turkey and Egypt. The Sultan might of course come here as a conqueror if he resolved to depose the Khediveh, and was able to carry out his resolution; but he could no more come to Egypt in any other capacity than that of

guest, while Ismail Pacha remains Khediveh, than Victor Emmanuel, who till lately had upon his coins the superscription of "Rè di Gerusalemme," could visit Judea as the reigning monarch. Opinions may differ, and do differ widely, as to the reforms which the Khediveh has introduced under his reign. Still, the broad fact cannot be questioned that, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, he has made an attempt to introduce into the East the civilization of the West. The effort, laudable or otherwise, places him at once above the ordinary level of Eastern rulers; and no person who has noted the extraordinary development of civilization now going on in Egypt can help feeling a deep interest in the ruler to whom this development is mainly due. It was my wish, therefore, before terminating my Egyptian tour, to have an opportunity of being presented to his Highness. My wish was responded to, as soon as expressed, with the uniform courtesy which I have received throughout my sojourn in this country; and this morning I had the honour of being presented to the Viceroy.

Eleven o'clock in the morning was the hour fixed for my reception. The Khediveh always receives visitors at that hour at the Palace of El-Eb-Din; and as he is, to a great extent, his own Prime Minister, the antechambers

were filled with numbers of Pachas, officials, contractors, engineers, and purveyors, who all had business of various kinds to transact with his Highness. Nothing could be simpler than the ceremonial observed at the palace. You drove up into a sort of stable-yard, crowded with carriages, and then picked your way through a number of outhouses to a doorway where a sentry was stationed. Passing him, you entered a bare room, lined with divans, where a number of gentlemen in uniform or evening dress were smoking cigarettes; and, after giving your card to one of the officials of the Court, you took your seat among the crowd. There was some little delay, caused by the Consul-General of Sweden having chosen that morning to present his credentials; and I was informed by the official who took up my card that it was doubtful whether the Viceroy would be able to hold any private reception. However, in a short time my introducer returned, and took me into an inner room almost as bare as the previous one, where the elect of the visitors whom the Khediveh had announced his wish to see were collected. Possibly the preference shown to me may have been due to the fact that, unlike nine-tenths of the persons who sought an audience, I had nothing, and was known to have nothing, to ask from the Viceroy. It is certain that I

was called out of my turn, and was led up a handsome flight of stairs into a long low room, as bare of furniture as the others I had seen, but surrounded with richly-hung divans, upon one of which the Khediveh was seated. The officer who introduced me asked me whether we should need an interpreter, as his Highness spoke French only, and, on my assuring him that I could dispense with the services of a dragoman in this instance, I was left alone with the Viceroy. The month being Ramadan, his Highness, contrary to his usual custom, was not smoking. He requested me to be seated, and then conversed with me in French for about half an hour on the state of Egypt and her relations with Turkey. For many reasons, I should not be justified in repeating the purport of this conversation. All I can say is, that, without having, so far as I can judge of myself, any disposition to think too much of exalted personages, I quitted his Highness with the conviction that I had been talking with a man of singular vigour of mind and clearness of expression, and this intellectual power is more marked because it is not set forth by any peculiar grace of person. Ismail Pacha is very short in stature, and his lack of inches is the more apparent from the vast breadth of his chest and shoulders. There is nothing about him of the oval face, the almond-

shaped eyes, the sharp, clear-cut features which seem to me the characteristics of the Arab race. Indeed, the only noteworthy features about his plain, shrewd face are the size of his brown, bushy, stubbly beard, his deep sunk eyes, underlined with wrinkles, and his broad, massive forehead. A certain air of self-possession and dignity is so common to all Orientals that you can hardly lay much stress on its possession by the Khediveh. What I should notice rather was that, together with this peculiarly Oriental quality, he has an animation and liveliness of manner which I, for my part, have never yet met with in any native-born Turk. It would, of course, be absurd for me, on the strength of one interview, to lay down any positive opinion as to the character of the Khediveh. That he has the outward bearing of a high-bred, courteous, and intelligent gentleman, is a fact for which I can vouch. More than this I am not in a position to say from any observation of my own; and if you are to form your opinion of the Khediveh from hearsay, you will find your authorities contradict themselves more flagrantly — and that is saying a good deal—than they do about other Egyptian topics. I have heard him abused and praised by equally well-informed persons for utterly inconsistent and incompatible qualities. The only plausible explana-

tion I have heard of these contradictory estimates was given me by an informant who had known the Viceroy from a child, and who, from his exceptional position, had little to gain by either exaggerating or decrying the merits of the Khediveh. My informant assured me that he had never known an instance of a man whose character had developed and strengthened so late in life as that of Ismail Pacha. Like all heirs-apparent to Oriental thrones, he was compelled to withdraw himself from all active participation in public life during the reign of his predecessor; and on his accession to the Khedivate, at a mature age, he seemed to be irresolute, inconsequent, and ready to sacrifice his purpose to the gratification of his vanity or his pleasures. But, as years went by, the master instinct, if I may employ the term, of Mehemet Ali made itself manifest in Ismail, as it has done in all the descendants of the founder of Egyptian independence; and the Khediveh, like his forefathers, has grown clear of head and strong of will, knowing his own purpose, and determined to carry out that purpose to the end.

Whether this explanation is founded upon fact I do not pretend to determine. It comes to me from a quarter entitled to speak with authority on such a subject; and it reconciles conflicting statements that have been made

to me by men who had no apparent interest in warping the truth one way or the other. In another letter I hope to say something on the Egyptian question. But it may be as well to give you here the opinions entertained on the subject by the Egyptian authorities. The following statement made to me recently may be regarded as an official explanation of the question between the Porte and the Sultan, as seen from the Cairene point of view.

There is still much to be done in Egypt; but the foundations of a real civilization are already firmly established. The internal difficulties of the situation are not formidable, the religious fanaticism of the Mussulman population in Egypt being now substantially subdued. With regard to external difficulties, the one permanent source of the dissensions between Egypt and Turkey is the superior progress in civilization made by the former Power. The civilization of Egypt is not part and parcel of the general progress of the East. On the contrary, whatever progress has been made in the East is due to the initiative of Egypt. In canals, schools, railroads, religious toleration, hospitals, engineering works, military organization, the formation of a fleet, postal service, the codification of the laws, and so on, the reform has invariably

been first set on foot in Egypt by Mehemet Ali or his successors, and subsequently introduced into Turkey in an imperfect form.

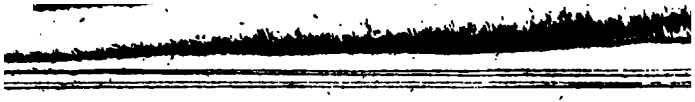
Even the organization of the Turkish army was mainly due to the war waged by the Porte with Mehemet Ali in Syria, as, when Turkey was replaced in possession of Palestine by the intervention of the great Powers, she found it necessary to create an army for herself based upon the system initiated by the Pacha of Egypt. The aim of Mehemet Ali, a man of extraordinary genius, was not to spread the triumph of Islam, but to modify Islam by the influence of Western civilization. The Sultans, by the necessity of their position and training, are incapacitated from governing in accordance with the principles of modern progress. They are brought up amidst the worst surroundings; they are ignorant to an inconceivable degree; they are utterly unacquainted with the condition of their people or of their own dominions. Their Ministers, by the etiquette of the Seraglio, are not allowed to communicate with them directly. The only source from which they derive any information is the Grand Vizier, who occasionally is a man of real ability, but who, even in that event, is precluded by considerations of precedence or by Court intrigues from exercising

his ability to any adequate advantage. There is no ground to hope for any valid improvement in the rule of the Porte, for the heirs of the Sultan are subjected to the same degrading influences as the Sovereign, and even to a greater extent. The only possibility of improvement lies in a radical change of the whole system under which the Sultan exercises his authority; but such a change is not upon the cards, the attitude of the Sultan towards civilization being the necessary consequence of the position he occupies as Commander of the Faithful. The Sultan has no *raison d'être* whatever, except as the champion of Islam. If he ceased to be the head of the Mussulman faith, the chief of the Mollahs, the patron of the Dervishes, he would be literally nobody. This being so, he is compelled, even against his wishes and better judgment, to rule in obedience to the prejudices of the Mohammedans. Mere regard for consistency and decorum precludes his being the sovereign alike of Mussulmans and of Christians. The transfer of jurisdiction from consular courts to local tribunals, on which such stress is laid by the Egyptian Government, could never be effectuated in Turkey, even supposing the great Powers to accede to the demanded reform, from the absolute impossibility of the Sultan's

placing a Mussulman and a Christian judge side by side upon the same bench to administer justice. The Egyptians have been taught a lesson in toleration since the days of the founder of the reigning dynasty. Mehemet Ali was in the habit of driving out with a European lady by his side. He set the example of associating on terms of equality with Europeans. This system has been pursued by his successors; and, through the example of their rulers, the people have gradually grown so accustomed to the spectacle of Christians and Mohammedans living together on a footing of equality, that they regard the equal treatment of both creeds as a matter of course. In a country where education is still very imperfectly diffused, it is absolutely essential that the importance of early training should be officially recognised by persons set in a high position; and for this reason the Khediveh has taken every opportunity of procuring for his children the advantages of a liberal European education. Such are the principles on which the government of Egypt is conducted. On the other hand, it would puzzle anybody to define the exact character of the Turkish Government. It is not a constitutional monarchy, for its subjects possess no political liberty; it is not an absolute despotism, for it has not power to enforce its

own decrees. It is "a paternal government without a father."

This statement coming, as it does, from a quarter which entitles it to respect, I have given in the words, so far as I can recall them, in which it was made to me.



LAST WORDS ON EGYPT.

ON BOARD THE RIPON, *December* 18.

I HAVE just come down from Cairo, and have passed for the last time through the Delta country, where the rich green wheat-crops are now sprouting above the soil, which, when I first saw it two months ago, lay buried beneath the Nile flood. I have caught my last view of the Pyramids towering above the Desert. I have said farewell to camels and palm-trees. I have basked for the last time for many a long month to come in glorious, burning, baking heat, and I ought to be now pitching and tossing on the black, seething sea, whose breakers I can see rolling shorewards outside the port. As a matter of fact, however, we are still at anchor in the port of Alexandria, and are likely to remain here till to-morrow.

Meanwhile, the detention affords me the opportunity of writing these last words as to the Egyptian question. It may, perhaps, have seemed strange to my readers that, being on the spot, I should hitherto have said so little

concerning the dissensions between the Porte and the Khediveh, whose peaceful termination seems to have created a good deal of unnecessary surprise in the diplomatic circles of Europe. I confess, honestly, that I have abstained from entering at any length on this subject, because I was convinced that much more was known about the state of the Turco-Egyptian negotiations at London and Paris than could possibly be known at Cairo. My business in the East, as I understood it, was rather to describe what I saw than to speculate on what I heard, and I regret the less that I did not communicate the political rumours with which Cairo and Alexandria were rife during the progress of the negotiations, from the simple fact that these rumours have been shown by the event to have been invariably erroneous. Moreover, I entertained throughout an unshaken conviction that war between Egypt and Turkey was not upon the cards, and that this being so, there was no probability of any absolute rupture of relations between the two Powers. You cannot have an outbreak of hostilities, where neither party is prepared to push matters to an extremity; and for very obvious reasons, even supposing that Egypt and Turkey could be sure of being allowed to fight out their own battles without any intervention of foreign Powers, neither

Sultan nor Khediveh was ready to appeal to the "ultima ratio" of war—a war whose conduct would be surrounded with immense difficulties. For Turkey to invade Egypt, either by land or sea, would be a most formidable enterprise; upon their own ground the Egyptian forces, judging from past experience, would be at least a match for any army that the Sultan could transport into the Delta. On the other hand, the Khediveh, even if successful, would gain very little by a war with his suzerain, while failure would inevitably entail his own deposition from the quasi-sovereignty he now holds in Egypt. But, as a matter of fact, both the Padishah and the Viceroy are aware that any actual outbreak of hostilities between their two countries, would afford a welcome excuse for the intervention of foreign Powers; and that if war were declared, there would at once be Russian troops upon the Danube, and a French fleet in occupation of the Suez Canal. Under these circumstances, the notion that the Porte would now send an army to invade the Delta, and force the Khediveh to submission, has always seemed to me utterly chimerical.

I perceive, however, that foreign writers on the Egyptian question are apt to assume, that the Porte has it within its power to bring the Khediveh to terms by the threat of

deposition. The assumption is that the Sultan, as head of Islam, exercises a sort of moral supremacy over the Mussulman population of Egypt, which no Pacha can afford to resist. As to all questions of sentiment it is most difficult to speak confidently; all I can say is, that residents in Egypt, who are constantly in communication with the native population, ridicule the notion that the fellahs or the Bedouins attach more authority to the firman of the Sultan than to the commands of the Khediveh. The Sultan, according to Mohammedan notions, is only the Head Sheikh of the community, and his religious authority bears no kind of resemblance to that which the Pope of Rome exercises—or rather exercised—by virtue of his office. The Arabs of Tripoli and Morocco are far more fervent Mohammedans than the Egyptians; and yet the Padishah has avowedly no more power of deposing the Beys of those countries by the mere might of his moral authority, than the Tsar Nicholas had of unseating the present Emperor of the French by refusing to recognise the Empire. If the Porte were to issue a firman to-morrow, proclaiming that Ismail Pacha was thereby deprived of all authority to reign over Egypt, it would remain a mere idle menace, unless the Sultan was also prepared to depose the Khediveh by force of arms. Far from the fellahs' looking on the

Soldan of Turkey as their natural lord and protector, they distrust him as the representative of their Turkish rulers, and the Khediveh would only gain in popularity with his native subjects, by anything which dissevered his cause from that of the foreign Turkish interest.

Such, at any rate, is the opinion of men who are practically acquainted with the Egyptians, and there is such an obvious absence of fanatic zeal among the Moslem population of the Delta, that I find it difficult to imagine that the mere withdrawal of the Sultan's sanction could materially impair the authority of Ismail Pacha or his successors. I have frequently seen allusions in foreign newspapers to the possibility, that by some Court intrigue or palace conspiracy the Khediveh—in case he refused to come to terms with the Porte—might be deposed in favour of some more pliant member of his family. If these allusions mean anything, they point to some dark deed like that which cut short the reign of Abbas Pacha; but, though such a solution of the Egyptian difficulty is not out of harmony with the traditions of Oriental statecraft, it is not in keeping with the modern policy of the Porte, while the bare suspicion of foul play would be as perilous to its authors as the reality would be to its victims. Moreover, to take the lowest ground, the mere transfer of the Khedi-

vate from one Pacha to another, would be of no advantage to the Porte. If Ismail Pacha could be gathered to his fathers, if the law of succession could be instantly set aside, and if Mustapha Pacha, the exiled brother of the Viceroy, and the bitterest of his personal enemies, could be placed upon the throne in his stead, the new Khediveh would, by a necessity of his position, be as jealous of his suzerain as his predecessor. The quarrel between Turkey and Egypt is not one between two rival dynasties, but between two different stages of civilization.

In saying this, I have no desire whatever to put myself forward as an apologist of the Egyptian dynasty. I have always believed that of all forms of government, that of native Oriental princes was well-nigh the worst, both in practice and theory; and what I have seen of the condition of Egypt has confirmed my profound disbelief in the merits of Oriental despotism as a system of government. But, failing a foreign protectorate, there is no possibility of Egypt's being governed by any other system than that of an autocratic *régime;* and if this be once granted, it is difficult to see how Egypt could be better off under any other dynasty than that of Mehemet Ali. There is one form of government, and only one, which is much worse than that of a native Oriental prince, and that is, the rule of a

Pacha holding office at the goodwill and favour of an Oriental despot. Had it not been for Mehemet Ali, Egypt would be governed—as Palestine and the other outlying provinces of the Ottoman Empire are governed to the present day—by a series of Pachas, whose one object is to keep in favour with the authorities at Stamboul, and to make as much money as possible out of their Pachalik. When once the Pachalik of Egypt had become hereditary, the Pachas had a direct personal interest in the permanent welfare of their dominions, and the regeneration of Egypt dates from the time when Mehemet Ali secured the quasi-independence of his territory from Turkish rule. Another great step has been made by the concession purchased from the Porte by the present Viceroy, by virtue of which the Khedivate descends to the eldest son. Under the old Mohammedan rule of succession, by which the Khediveh was succeeded by his eldest male relative, the first object of each ruler was to amass a fortune for his children; now, however, that the eldest son is heir to the Khedivate, the interests of the dynasty and of the family have become identical. Hitherto the Pachas of Egypt have all been men of more than average ability, but even if this were not to be the case hereafter, the desire to aggrandize a kingdom, the succession to which is reserved

to their sons and heirs, is an instinct common to the most indolent and ignorant of rulers. Already Egypt has attained a degree of civilization under her Khedivehs to which no other part of Turkey can show any parallel. The Suez Canal is only the greatest of a long series of improvements that have altered the face of the country; and the permanence of these improvements is ensured by the fact, that the policy of Mehemet Ali and his successors has introduced a powerful foreign resident element into Egypt. It may very reasonably be questioned, whether the daily increasing power and influence of this element is not fraught with danger to the independent existence of the land. The old fable of the horse who got the man to mount upon his back, to enable him to get the better of the stag, is inevitably recalled to an impartial spectator's mind, as he notices how Egypt is strengthening herself, and developing her resources, under the guidance of French and English settlers; but for the time being, the amalgamation that the Khediveh has brought to pass between the rival civilizations of the East and the West has placed Egypt far ahead of other independent Oriental States.

To what extent the native population has gained by the reforms which the Khediveh has introduced is a point on

which it is very hard to obtain any trustworthy information. Still, as a matter of fact, I cannot doubt that the railroads, factories, canals, schools, and other improvements to be found in Egypt, and not in Turkey, must tend to elevate the moral as well as the material condition of the fellah. And, contrary to the opinion of many travellers, I do not believe the condition of the fellah under the rule of Ismail Pacha to be *relatively* a very bad one. Twelve centuries ago, when Amrou conquered the Delta in the name of Islam, he wrote to the Caliph Omar, saying that the people of Egypt were eminently easy to govern, because, from time immemorial, they had been used to seeing the fruit of their labour confiscated to the use of their masters. What was true in the days of Omar is scarcely less true in those of Ismail Pacha. Still, there are signs that a better era is coming for the fellahs. For the first time since the reign of the Pharaohs, Egypt is ruled by a native dynasty. With a view to liberating themselves from the tutelage of Turkey, the Khedivehs are compelled to favour the development of an Egyptian nationality; and while the Viceroy rules his country with the advice of native statesmen, and the support of a native army, the condition of his people can hardly be so hopeless as it was while the Pachas were surrounded by Turks, and

relied on the power of Turkey for the maintenance of their authority in Egypt.

The severance of Egypt from Turkey is only a question of time; but, in the interest of the reigning dynasty, I believe nothing can be better for Egypt than the maintenance of the *status quo* between Turkey and Egypt. It is true that, including direct tribute and indirect largesses, Egypt pays a million a year to Turkey, or one-seventh part of her annual income, for the honour of calling the Sultan Suzerain. On the other hand, the protection of the Porte, onerous as it may be to the fellah, is of real value to the Khediveh, as a safeguard against the encroachments of the Western Powers. The motives which induce England and France to uphold the integrity of the Ottoman Empire cause these Powers to respect the independence of Egypt so long as it forms part of the Turkish dominions. This fact is so patent that it is recognised by the statesmen of the Egyptian Government, and is acted upon, even if reluctantly, by the Khediveh himself.

Under these circumstances, I attach little importance to the concessions which the Viceroy has made to the Porte in order to avoid an open rupture. I have seen enough already of Egypt to feel convinced that while the Viceroy's credit remains good he will find no difficulty in

raising money, no matter what formal restrictions may impede his borrowing without the sanction of the Sultan. But, indeed, anything which restricts the borrowing faculties of the Khediveh can only redound to his advantage. Egypt already enjoys virtual independence; and the one real danger which threatens her retention of the rights she has acquired is the embarrassment in which her finances have been placed by the extravagance of the Khediveh's Government. Retrenchment ought to be her state policy; and, given an equilibrium between the Khediveh's expenditure and her incomings, he can afford to wait for an opportunity for the acquisition of her nominal independence—an opportunity the approach of which is daily brought nearer and nearer by the overwhelming financial difficulties of the Ottoman Empire. Peace abroad and economy at home are the principles which ought to direct the policy of Egypt, and which for the present are happily in the ascendant in the councils of Cairo.

With these remarks, I must bring my survey of Egyptian affairs to a close. The solution of a great problem is in progress upon the Delta; and it is far too early to assume that it will be successfully accomplished. Still, all who have witnessed Egypt under the same circum-

stances as myself, cannot but feel a deep interest in the fortunes of the strange Nile-watered land, on whose low sandy shores I am now looking for the last time. And if in these letters I have conveyed to the readers who have followed me from the Danube to the Nile, some share of the interest excited in my mind by the scenes through which I have passed, I, for my part, shall be content.

THE END.

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